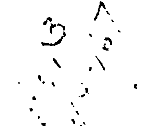

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THE GREAT GALEOTO



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THE GREAT GALEOTO

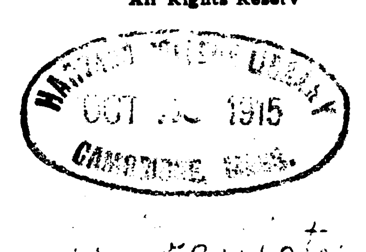
A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS AND A PROLOGUE

JOSE ECHEGARAY

Translated from the Spanish *by* JACOB S. FASSETT, JR.



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AUTHOR'S DEDICATION

TO SOCIETY

I dedicate this drama, because it is to the good will of everyone, and not to my own merits, that I owe the result obtained.

To everyone, indeed: to the PUBLIC, which with a profound instinct and a high moral sense, grasped from the very first the idea of my work, and took it tenderly under its protection; to the PRESS, which has acted so nobly and generously toward me, and which has given me proofs of its sympathy which I shall never forget; to the ACTORS, who have given life on the stage to the characters in my work, now with a splendid talent and highest inspiration, now with exquisite delicacy and profound feeling, sometimes with honorable and magnificent energy, at others, with a dramatic inflection worthy of the great masters of the art of Declamation; and always with perfect discretion and tact, when there were dangers to avoid.

To all I owe, and to all I give, in these disorderly phrases, the humble but sincere proof of my profound gratitude.

TO

PROFESSOR MARTIN W. SAMPSON

OF CORNELL UNIVERSITY

AND HIS CLASS IN DRAMATIC

STRUCTURE

THIS TRANSLATION IS RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED

JOSE ECHEGARAY

JOSE ECHEGARAY y Eizaguirre, the celebrated Spanish mathematician, statesman and dramatist, was born in the month of March, 1833. At an early age he was taken to Murcia where he received a thorough education, first in a grammar school, and then in a university. He graduated from the latter with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

He then returned to Madrid and entered the School of Engineers. During his five years' course there, he manifested such assiduity and displayed such real ability, especially in mathematics, that he graduated at the head of his class. His mathematical skill had attracted some attention and he found no difficulty in securing work at Almeria and Granada.

He did not remain long at this, however, for as early as 1858, at the age of twenty-five, he was called to a professorship in the School of Engineers at Madrid, where he had established such a reputation before. Here, for ten years, he taught Mechanics, Pure and Applied Mathematics, and Stereometry. During this period he wrote several articles and treatises on scientific subjects, which

have been very favorably commented upon by competent judges. In 1856 he was admitted to the Academy of Sciences.

It is at this point that he began to show an interest in politics. He became a member of the Society of Political Economy, and was one of the founders of *La Revista.* His writings on the political questions of the day brought him into the public eye, and in 1868 he was appointed to a place in the Revolutionary Cabinet, where he held the portfolios of Commerce, Education and Finance until 1874, when Alphonso XII was put upon the throne of Spain. He then gave up politics and turned his attention to writing plays. He evinced the same degree of excellence in his dramatic writings as he had in his scientific achievements.

As a writer of drama, Echegaray was very prolific. Within the space of twenty-five years, he wrote some sixty plays.

La Hija Natural was written as early as 1867, but was rejected. It appeared again in 1877 entitled *Para tal Culpa tal Pena* and was produced successfully. *La Ultima Noche* was written in 1867 and produced in 1875. *El Libro Talonario* was the play that gave Echegaray his reputation. It was produced on the night of February 18th, 1874, under the pseudonym of Jorge Hayaseca. So individual was the style, however, that the critics in-

stantly recognized the work of Echegaray. The play was received most enthusiastically. *La Esposa del Vengador* came later in the same year. It was pronounced a popular triumph. It was from 1874 on that he produced his best plays. They followed each other very quickly. The best known and most widely read of these later plays are: *En El Puño de La Espada* (1875), *O' Locura O' Santidad* (1877), *En el Seno de la Muerte* (1879), *El Gran Galeoto* (1881), *El Hijo de Don Juan* (1892), *El Poder de la Impotencia* (1893), and *El Loco Dios* (1900). Both *El Hijo de Don Juan,* and *El Loco Dios* are strongly influenced by Ibsen.

El Gran Galeoto is by far the most widely read and the most popular of all of Echegaray's dramas. It was first produced on the evening of March 19th, 1881, at the Teatro Espanol in Madrid. It was a tremendous success, and is still received with great enthusiasm whenever it is put on. Space does not permit a longer discussion of this great drama.

In 1904, Echegaray divided the Noble prize for literature with Mistral, the poet of Provence. In 1905, he became again actively engaged in politics. Here we will leave him, a brilliant, vigorous old man, who at the advanced age of eighty-one, can look back upon a life well spent and full of success in whatever he undertook, whether in science, politics or literature. It is in literature that he ex-

celled, however. In the difficult technique of the drama, in the artful construction and arrangement of dramatic scenes, no one surpasses him.

J. S. F. Jr.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Don Julian
Theodora—His wife
Don Severo
Donna Mercedes—his wife
Pepito—Son of Mercedes and Severo
Ernest—A poet
Rueda—His friend
A Servant
Another Servant
Time—To-day
Scene—Madrid

Julian — Theodora
adopted Ernest.

Severo — Mercedes
Pepito

The Great Galeoto

PROLOGUE

A study. At L. a balcony. At R. a door. Almost at center, a table with papers, books, and a lighted reading lamp. To the right, a sofa.

Night

Scene I

Ernest seated at the table as if about to write.

Ernest.

No! It cannot be done! It is like struggling with the impossible. The idea is there, and stirs in my brain. I feel it. At times an internal light illumines it, and I see it. I see its floating form, its vague outlines, and suddenly there sound in its depths, voices which animate it; cries of pain; amorous sighs, sardonic laughter—a whole world of passions which live and struggle there. They burst from me and fill the air about me. I say to myself, "Now is the time," and take up my pen, with my eyes fixed on space, and every nerve on the alert. I bend over my work—but alas! The sarcasm of inability! The outlines are effaced, the vision vanishes, the cries and sighs fade away, and nothing is

left. Oh, the monotony of empty space; of inert thought; of drowsy lassitude! But worse than this is the monotony of an immovable pen, and a blank sheet of paper; a paper without the life of an idea.

Oh, how many shapes Nothing has! And how it jests, black and silent, with writers of my stamp! Many, many, shapes: canvases without color, marbles without definite outlines, and confused noises of chaotic vibrations. But none more irritating, more insolent, more despicable, than this miserable pen (*Throws it aside in disgust*), and this blank sheet. Well I may not be able to fill you, but I can destroy you, worthless accomplice of my ambition and of my eternal humiliation! Take this—and this—(*Tears the paper to little bits*) (*Pause*)—But what of it? It's lucky no one saw me, for the truth is, this anger is ridiculous and wrong.—No, I won't give up. I'll keep on thinking more and more, until I either succeed, or die in the attempt. I'll never consider myself beaten. Let's see—let's see if in this way—

SCENE II

Ernest and Don Julian. He enters R. clad in evening clothes. His overcoat is on his arm.

Julian.

(*Appearing at the door, but without entering.*) Hello Ernest!

Ernest.

Don Julian!

Julian.

Still working? Do I disturb you?

Ernest.

(*Getting up*) Disturb me! Heaven forbid, Don Julian! Come in, come in! But, where is Theodora?

Julian.

(*Coming in*) We just came from the theatre. She went up stairs to the third floor with my brother and sister to see something or other Mercedes bought. I was going to my own rooms when I saw a light in yours; so I looked in to say good night.

Ernest.

Were there many people there?

Julian.

A great many, as usual: and all your friends asked after you. They seemed surprised that you didn't go.

Ernest.

My! What interest!

Julian.

Very little, considering what you deserve. But have you made good use of these three hours of solitude and inspiration?

Ernest.

Of solitude—yes. Of the other—no. My Lady Inspiration wouldn't come to me, although I begged her on bended knee.

Julian.

Didn't keep her appointment, eh?

Ernest.

It wasn't the first time she has failed me, either. However, if I made no progress, I *did* make a profitable discovery.

Julian.

Which was—

Ernest.

That I am a poor fool.

Julian.

Fool! Well that *is* a splendid discovery.

Ernest.

I'm neither more nor less.

Julian.

And why should you be so angry with yourself? Can't you get that play you were telling me about the other day out of your head?

Ernest.

Out of my head! I'm the one who is going out of my head!

Julian.

And what is there about the inspiration, and the play, which so troubles our Ernest?

Ernest.

It's like this. When I first conceived the idea for the play, I thought that it was a fertile one; but when I came to give it form, and dress it in the proper clothes for the stage, I found I had a strange thing: something difficult, undramatic, impossible.

Julian.

But why is the thing impossible? Come, tell me something about it, for I am getting curious. (*Sits down on the sofa.*)

Ernest.

Imagine this—that the principal character, the one who causes the drama, develops it and animates it, and brings on the catastrophe, cannot come upon the scene!

Julian.

Is he so ugly, so repugnant, or so terrible?

Ernest.

It isn't that. He is no more ugly than you or I. He isn't bad either. He's neither bad nor good. He certainly isn't repugnant. I am not such a sceptic, nor such a misanthrope, nor am I so disillusioned with life as to affirm such a thing, or commit such an injustice.

Julian.

Well, then. What *is* the reason?

Ernest.

Don Julian, the reason is, that the character of whom I speak has no place materially in the scenario.

Julian.

Great Heavens, man, how you talk! Is the drama mythological, and do giants appear in it?

Ernest.

There are giants, yes; but modern ones.

Julian.

In a word—?

Ernest.

In a word, this character is—"Society."

Julian.

"Society!" Well you are right. The Drama hasn't room for society. That is an indisputable fact, and one which has been demonstrated many times.

Ernest.

Well, now you see I was right.

Julian.

Not entirely. "Society" can be condensed into two different types and characters. I don't understand those matters, but I have heard that it has been done more than once.

Ernest.

Yes, but in my case; that is to say, in my play, it cannot be done.

Julian.

Why?

Ernest.

For many reasons which it would take too long to explain—especially at this time of night.

Julian.

Never mind. Tell me some of them.

Ernest.

Look you: Each individual of that total mass, each head of that monster of a hundred thousand heads, of that giant of the century whom I call "Society" takes part in my play only for a very short time, speaks one word—no more—directs one glance only. Perhaps all this action is summed up in words without passion, without anger, without evil, indifferently and heedlessly, and often times for amusement.

Julian.

What then?

Ernest.

From those bold words, from those burning glances, from those indifferent smiles, from all that small gossip and from all those little evils; from all

that which we might call the insignificant rays of dramatic light, concentrated in one focus, and in one family; there results the action, and the exposition, the struggle and its victims. If I represent all humanity by a few types of symbolic characters, I have to put in each one that which is really divided among many, and so we would get a false impression. A few types on the stage, repulsive because they are wicked, improbable because their wickedness has no object, would result in the danger of people thinking that I am trying to picture an infamous society which is corrupt and cruel, when I only am trying to show that not even the most insignificant are lost to good or to evil, because, summed up by the mysterious influences of our modern life, they are able to produce tremendous effects.

Julian.

Stop! That's enough! Don't go on! All this is way beyond me. I catch a glimpse of something, but it is very hazy. In a word, you understand more about those things than I do. If it were a question of money orders, letters of exchange, bills and discounts, it would be different.

Ernest.

Oh no. You have good sense, and that is the principal thing.

Julian.

Thanks, Ernest. You are very kind.

Ernest.

But, are you convinced?

Julian.

I am not. But, there ought to be some way of avoiding that inconvenience.

Ernest.

If it were that alone.

Julian.

Is there more?

Ernest.

I should say so. Tell me; what is the dramatic resource of excellence?

Julian.

Man alive.—I don't know exactly what you mean by "dramatic resources," but what I can tell you is that I am only amused by plays in which there are love affairs, and especially unhappy love affairs; for I have plenty of happy love in my home, with my Theodora.

Ernest.

Fine! Magnificent! But, in my play there can scarcely be any love affairs.

Julian.

Bad, very bad, say I. Listen. I don't know what your play is, but I suspect that it won't please anyone.

Ernest.

That's what I told you. However, it *could* contain love, and even jealousy.

Julian.

Well, with that, with a plot that is interesting, and well unfolded; with an effective situation which er—

Ernest.

No, Sir! Certainly not that. Everything must be simple, matter-of-fact, almost commonplace, because the play cannot show itself on the surface. It goes on within the characters. It advances slowly, takes possession today of a thought, tomorrow of a heart beat, and undermines the will little by little.

Julian.

But how is all that interior havoc to be shown? Who will tell the spectator about it? Where is it to be seen? Why, we'll have to spend the evening hunting a look or a sigh, a gesture, or a phrase. My son, that isn't amusing oneself! To enter into it

to such an extent, one would have to study philosophy.

Ernest.

You echo my thoughts.

Julian.

No.—I don't want to discourage you, either. You know what you are about, and,—well—although your play may be a bit colorless, although it may seem heavy and without interest; so long as you have a strong catastrophe, and your dénouement is—

Ernest.

Catastrophe!—Dénouement! Just about when the curtain falls.

Julian.

That is to say, that the play begins when—when it ends?

Ernest.

I'm afraid so, although I'll try and put a little warmth in it.

Julian.

Why, what you ought to do is to write a "second play," one which begins when the first ends,

because according to you the first isn't worth while, and will probably give you a lot of trouble.

Ernest.

That's just what I thought.

Julian.

Well, there we are. There lies your cleverness, and the force of your logic! What is its title?

Ernest.

Title! Why that's another matter. It can't have a title.

Julian.

What? Do you mean to say that there's no title?

Ernest.

No Sir. Unless we put it in Greek "to make it clearer," as Hermogenes says.

Julian.

Come now, Ernest. You were probably dreaming when I came. You were dreaming nonsense, and now you tell me your dreams.

Ernest.

Dreaming? Yes. Nonsense? Perhaps I *am* talking nonsense. You have good sense and hit the nail on the head every time.

Julian.

In this case, it doesn't take a very steady hand to hit the nail. A play in which the principal character does not appear, to which there is scarcely any love story, in which nothing happens which doesn't happen every day, which begins with the fall of the curtain on the last act, and which has no title; I don't see how it can be written, nor how acted, nor who will listen to it, nor how it can be called a play.

Ernest.

Well it is a play. All that remains is to give it form, and—I don't know how to do it.

Julian.

Do you want my advice?

Ernest.

Your advice? The advice of my friend and protector, my foster father? Why Don Julian!

Julian.

Come, come, Ernest. Don't let's have a sentimental play here for want of yours, which we have

declared impossible. I ask you if you want my advice.

Ernest.

And I say of course I do.

Julian.

Well then, leave your plays, go to bed, and rest. Come shooting with me tomorrow and kill a few brace of partridges. This will excuse you from killing a couple of characters in your play, and may also excuse the public from doing the same by you. Then instead of telling me stories, you'll thank me.

Ernest.

That can't be. I *must* write the play.

Julian.

But, man, you conceived it in mortal sin.

Ernest.

I don't know how I conceived it, but I did. I feel it in my brain. It is moving there. It asks for life in the outside world, and I must grant its request.

Julian.

But, can't you look for another plot?

Ernest.

What about *this* idea?

Julian.

Oh, send it to the Devil!

Ernest.

Why Don Julian! Do you believe that an idea which has persisted so obstinately within, should be annulled and destroyed because it so pleases us? I would like to think about another play, but this—this cursed one in question will not give the other room until it comes into the world.

Julian.

Well may God give it easy birth!

Ernest.

"That is the question," as Hamlet says.

Julian.

(*In a low voice and humorously.*)
Couldn't you put it in a foundling asylum for anonymous literature?

Ernest.

No, Don Julian. I am a man of conscience. My children, good or bad, are legitimate, and they will bear my name.

Julian.

(*Getting ready to exit.*)
I say no more. That which must be, is written.

Ernest.

I wish it were. It is not written, unfortunately; but it doesn't matter, for if I don't write it, another will.

Julian.

Well, here's to your work, and good luck. May no one get ahead of you.

SCENE III

Ernest. *Don Julian.* *Theodora.*

Theodora.

(*Outside.*) Julian! Julian!

Julian.

It is Theodora.

Theodora.

Are you there, Julian?

Julian.

(*Going to the door.*) Yes, here I am; come in.

Theodora.

(*Entering.*) Good evening, Ernest.

Ernest.

Good evening, Theodora. Did they sing well?

Theodora.

As usual—and you,—did you work hard?

Ernest.

As usual—not at all!

Theodora.

Well, if that's the case, you would have done better in coming with us. All my friends asked for you.

Ernest.

You see how "society" is interested in me.

Julian.

Of course,—since you are going to make "society" the principal character in your play. You didn't imagine that they were merely interested in you as a friend, did you?

Theodora.

(*With curiosity.*) A play?

Julian.

Silence! No title, no characters, no action, no catastrophe,—Sublime! Good night, Ernest. Come Theodora.

Ernest.

Good bye, Don Julian.

Theodora.

See you tomorrow.

Ernest.

Good night.

Theodora.

(*To Don Julian.*) How absent-minded Mercedes was!

Julian.

And Severo was furious.

Theodora.

Why, do you suppose?

Julian.

How do I know? On the other hand, Pepito was happy enough to do for both.

Theodora.

He is always like that,—and always speaking badly of everyone.

Julian.

A good character for Ernest's play.
Exeunt Theodora and Julian at R.

SCENE IV

Ernest.

Don Julian may say what he wants to, but I will not abandon my undertaking. Away with flagrant cowardice! I will not give way, but will continue my work.

(*He gets up and walks up and down, as though very much agitated. Then he goes to the balcony.*)

Oh night, help me; for in your darkness better than in the blue mantle of day, are outlined the luminous shapes of inspiration. Lift your roofs, oh Heroic City of a thousand houses. I am a poet in dire need, and I must have your help. Let me see the men and women entering their homes as they seek nightly rest after the restless hours of public pleasures. As I listen there come to my ears the words of all those who asked Julian and Theodora about me. A glass picks up scattered rays and forms them into one great beam of light; the dark night is made from lesser shadows; the mountain from grains of earth, and the sea from drops of water. In the same way do I form my drama; from scraps

of your conversation, from your vague smiles, from your curious glances, from the thousand and one little trivialities which you scattered in cafés, theaters, meetings, and pageants, and which are now floating in the air about me. So may the modest glass of my intelligence be a lens, which will bring into focus both lights and shadows in order that in it may grow the exciting force, and the tragic dénouement of the plot. My plan is forming: and now it even has a title, for there in the lamp light, I see the immortal work of the immortal Florentine poet. He gives me in Italian what in Spanish would be absolute imprudence, and even audacity to write in a book, or say upon the stage. Francesca and Paolo, may the story of your love help and guide me.

(*He sits down at the table and prepares to write.*)

Now to work! My play is beginning! Now the first page is blank no longer, for I have given it a title. (*Writing.*)

The Great Galeoto!

(*He writes feverishly.*)

Curtain.

ACT I

A drawing room in Julian's apartment. In the background a large doorway opening into a small passageway. Beyond this can be seen the dining room door which remains closed until the end of the act. At L.R. a balcony; at R. a door, and at L. there are two more doors. At L. a sofa, and at R. a small table and a chair. Everything suggests splendid luxury. It is late afternoon.

Scene I

Theodora and Julian. Theodora is at the balcony, and Julian is seated on the sofa. He looks thoughtful.

Theodora.

What a beautiful sunset! What clouds! And what a splendid light in the sky! If our future is written in the sky as the poets say, and as our grandfathers believed: if the stars write the mysterious secret of human destinies in the heavens: and if this beautiful evening is a forecast of our future, what a lucky one we will have! And what a happy one! Think of having as much light in our life as there is in that sky! (*to Julian*) What do you think about it? But what are you thinking about? Come and look at this view, Julian.—Why don't you answer me?

Julian.

(*Absent-mindedly*) Er—what did you say?

Theodora.

(*Crossing to him*) Weren't you listening to me?

Julian.

I always want to when I am near you, you are so charming. But sometimes things bother me. I have cares and business worries to think about which make me absent-minded.

Theodora.

Well then, I hate them because they rob my husband of his attention,—if not of his affection. (*tenderly*) But what is the matter, Julian? Something is troubling you, and it must be something serious, for you have been sad and silent for a long time. Are you ill? Tell me, Julian, for it is right that if I share your happy moments, I should share your unhappy ones, too.

Julian.

Ill!—When you are well?—Sad!—When I possess the very compendium of all joys in my Theodora? Why, when I see that healthy glow upon your cheeks, and that sparkle in your eyes, which is like the light from your very soul shining forth; when I realize that you belong to me and to no

one else,—what illness, or sadness, or anything else unpleasant can keep me from being the very happiest of mortals?

Theodora.

And it isn't money matters, either?

Julian.

I never lost any sleep or appetite over money. And as I never had any aversion to it, or even a dislike for it, it came into my coffers submissive as a lamb. I have been rich, and I still am. Thanks be to God, and to my own good luck, Theodora, your friend Don Julian of Garagarza, the banker of Madrid, Cadiz, and El Puerto, will have, if not a very great fortune, at least unfailing and secure credit until he dies of old age.

Theodora.

Well then, why were you so preoccupied a moment ago?

Julian.

I was thinking—thinking about something good.

Theodora.

(*Caressingly*) That's not strange, Julian, since it was you who were thinking.

Julian.

Flatterer!

Theodora.

But I want to know what it is.

Julian.

I'd like to find some way of finishing a good work.

Theodora.

You mean the new factory?

Julian.

No. I don't mean a work of stone and iron.

Theodora.

Well then, it must be—

Julian.

A work of charity. A sacred debt of old times.)

Theodora.

(*With natural and spontaneous joy*) Oh! *Now* I know!

Julian.

Yes?

Theodora.

You were thinking about Ernest.

Julian.

This time you are right.

Theodora.

Poor boy. I'm glad you were thinking about him. He's so good, so noble, and so generous.

Julian.

Just like his father: a model of loyalty and nobility.

Theodora.

I should say so! And he's so talented too. Twenty-six, and just look at him! Why, he's a perfect wonder!

Julian.

That's true enough, but it isn't everything, and that's the worst of it. I'm afraid that being used to going about with his head above the clouds, he won't know how to get along in the world, which

as you know is prosaic and treacherous, and never re-pays the subtleties of genius until centuries after its death.

Theodora.

But he'll have you for a guide, Julian, for you certainly aren't planning to abandon him?

Julian.

Abandon him?—I certainly would be a black-hearted scoundrel if I should forget what I owe his father. Don Juan of Acedo risked his name, property, and even his life for my father. If this boy needs my life's blood, let him ask for it, for it is always ready to pay the debts of the name I bear.

Theodora.

Fine, Julian! That is like you!

Julian.

You remember how they told me a year or so ago that Don Juan was dead, that his son was left in poverty, and how it took me no time at all to board the train, go to Gerona, take him almost by force, bring him here, put him in the middle of this room, and say to him, "everything I have is yours, for your father's sake. If you wish, you may be master of this house. At least look upon me as your second father, and although I cannot be as good

a one as your first, I can at least try to be. And as far as loving you is concerned—well, we'll see."

Theodora.

Yes, I remember. And then the poor boy threw his arms about your neck and wept like a child.

Julian.

You're right; he *is* a child, and we ought to begin to think about his future. And that's why I was so preoccupied a moment ago. I was looking for some way to carry out my plans for him, when you began pestering me with a beautiful view, a lot of clouds, and a red sun—all of which I have hated since two more beautiful lights have been shining in my life.

Theodora.

I don't see what you are driving at. "Plans for Ernest?"

Julian.

That's what I said.

Theodora.

Well can you do more than you have already done for him? He's lived here a year with us as if he were our very own. Not even if he were your own son, and my own brother, could we have shown him more love and affection.

Julian.

Yes, but that's not enough.

Theodora.

Why not? Now I think—

Julian.

You are considering the present, and I am thinking of the future.

Theodora.

The future? Well I can arrange *that* easily enough. Let him live in this house as long as he wants to—for years if he likes, just as if it were his own home—until later on, he falls in love; as is just and natural. Then, you will gladly give him a good share of your fortune. They will go from the church to their house—"he and she" as the song goes, and I agree with it, "must have a house." And just because they will live away from us will be no reason for us to forget him, or love him less. And so you see—they'll be happy—and we too, of course. They will have children, of course—and we too—(*caressingly*) at least a little girl! Then she will fall in love with Ernest's son,—*they'll* get married, and—(*The volubility, the wit, and the shading of this speech is recommended the talent of the actress.*)

Julian.

(*Laughing*) Great Heavens! Where are you going to stop?

Theodora.

You were speaking about the future, and I offer you this one. If it isn't going to be like that, I won't like it, and I won't accept it!

Julian.

It *will* be like that, Theodora, but—

Theodora.

Dear me—so there's a "but" in it?

Julian.

Look here, Theodora, we are doing our best to bring up this lad as a debt we owe his father. To this debt are added demands upon our affection, for we like him for his own sake as well as for his father's. But in all human affairs there is always something complex. There are always two points of view. The coin always has a reverse side. In this case, however, there are more than opposite sides of the same coin. There are two absolutely different matters. That is, on the one hand the giving, and on the other, the receiving of protection. Now I am afraid that he will find out what I have been doing for him and be humiliated by it. He is

noble, and high-minded, and—almost haughty. So it is absolutely necessary, Theodora, to find some way out of his present situation. We will do even more for him than we are doing now, and yet pretend that we are doing less.

Theodora.

But how are we going to do it?

Julian.

You'll see. (*looks up stage*) But here he comes.

Theodora.

Hush, then!

SCENE II

Theodora and Julian: Ernest up stage.

Julian.

Welcome!

Ernest.

(*Nods in a troubled way, and sits at the table. He is very thoughtful*) Theodora,—

Julian.

(*Going to him*) What's the matter?

Ernest.

Oh, nothing.

Julian.

You look as though something were wrong. Are you ill?

Ernest.

Not a bit.

Julian.

Offended at anything?

Ernest.

No indeed.

Julian.

Perhaps I'm in the way?

Ernest.

You in the way? Good Lord! (*rises and crosses to him impetuously*) No.—Your love and friendship give you the right to know. You read my very thoughts when you looked into my eyes just now. Yes, something *is* wrong, and I'll tell you what it is. I hope you will forgive me, Don Julian, and you too Theodora. I am a fool, a child, and

an ingrate. I don't either deserve your kindness or your loving care. I ought to be happy with such a father and such a sister, and without ever having to give a thought to the future,—but don't you see? That's the trouble—I *ought* to think about it. I hate to make this explanation,—don't you understand?—Yes, you must understand that my situation here is false. (*with energy*) I am living here on charity!

Theodora.

That word—

Ernest.

Theodo—

Theodora.

Offends us.

Ernest.

I know I spoke plainly,—but it is true.

Julian.

No it isn't. If any one lives on charity in this house,—it isn't you—it's I!

Ernest.

Oh, I know all about the loyal friendship between our fathers, and all the money connected with

it. Such an act of generosity does honor to my father, but I would stain his memory were I to accept from you all that his courage was worth. I am young, Don Julian, and although I am not good for much, I can at least do something to earn my bread. I don't know whether all this is pride or madness, for I am losing my sense of judgment. But I remember what my father used to tell me: "You needn't have anyone else do what you can do yourself; and whatever you earn, you owe to nobody."

Julian.

So my favors humiliate and degrade you! And your friends seem pestering creditors!

Theodora.

You are generally right in what you say, Ernest, and very wise: but in this case your heart knows more than you do.

Julian.

My father never showed such a contemptuous pride to your father!

Theodora.

It seems to me that in those days, friendship was an entirely different matter.

Ernest.

Theodora!

Theodora.

(*To Julian*) It's his great anxiety.

Ernest.

(*Deeply moved*) Oh I know I'm a fool, and very ungrateful. Forgive me, Don Julian.

Julian.

(*To Theodora, referring to Ernest*). My! He's hot-headed!

Theodora.

(*To Julian*) He's not living in our world!

Julian.

That's right. He may be wise and very deep, but at the same time, you could drown him in a puddle of water!

Ernest.

(*Sadly*) I don't know much about this world; nor can I seem to find my way about in it. True enough!—but I can guess a lot, and when I guess, I tremble,—why, I don't know. For I am being suffocated by the stagnant pools of society as one is drowned in the sea. And these pools frighten me more,—much more than does the deep sea which is held by the limits of its shores. But these pools

extend their emanations throughout all space. Strong arms can fight against the waves of the sea, but there is no way of struggling against the subtle poisons of these stagnant pools. If I must be conquered, and there is no humiliation in being conquered, I only ask to see clearly before me in my last moments, the sea that drowns me, the sword that wounds me, or the rock that crushes me. I only want to feel my adversary's body, to see his fury, and to hate him as I fall and die. I do not want my heaving breast to breathe in from the ambient air the poison which kills me.

Julian.

(*To Theodora*) Didn't I tell you? He's out of his head!

Theodora.

But Ernest, what do you mean?

Julian.

Apropos of what we were saying, why must you see all that?

Ernest.

When I see myself here, sheltered and protected by you, I believe that everyone must be thinking about me the very thing I am thinking about myself. When I go out in your carriage with you;

when I go for a morning walk with Theodora or Mercedes; when I sit in your box at the Royal, when I go hunting with you; when I occupy the same seat at your table day after day—although it may be at your most earnest wish—the truth is, that everyone says in some way or another: "Who is this fellow? Is he a relative? No. A secretary? Not that either. A partner? Well, if he is, he doesn't do much work."—That is what they all whisper to each other.

Julian.

Never! You imagine it all.

Ernest.

Please, I—

Julian.

Then name someone who—

Ernest.

Oh, I ca—

Julian.

Just one name is all I want.

Ernest.

Well, he is very near you. He lives upstairs.

Julian.

And that is—?

Ernest.

Don Severo.

Julian.

My own brother?—

Ernest.

Yes, your own brother. Isn't that enough? Doña Mercedes his wife, is another. Still another? —Pepito. *Now,* what do you say?

Julian.

(*Angrily*) Well I swear without any exaggeration that he is more unusual than he is severe; that she chatters on without ever thinking what she says; and that the boy is a—a puppet!

Ernest.

They only repeat what they hear.

Julian.

Not a bit of it. You're cavilling. Where he has good intentions, a gentleman doesn't mind what the

world says. The harsher the gossip, the nobler, the greater, and the more profound is his contempt for it all.

Ernest.

That is splendid, and every gentleman should realize it. But I have learned that whatever people say, whether with good or bad intent depending upon what inspires it, commences by being a lie, and ends by being the truth. Is a bit of gossip that spreads about and shows us some hidden sin, the reflection of the past, or does it invent the evil? Does it stamp with its cursed seal a fault which already existed, or does it engender a fault where there was none before, and so give guilt a chance? Is the gossip a despicable wretch, or is he merely severe? Is he a co-operator or a devulger of secrets. Is he an avenger, or a tempter? Does he kill, or does he merely drag down? Does he wound for pleasure or for pain? And if he condemns, does he do so from a sense of justice, or of pleasure? I confess I don't know, Don Julian,—perhaps he does all: but time, opportunity, and facts will tell.

Julian.

Look here—I don't understand a word of what you're saying. It must be philosophy,—or madness! Your genius must be exhausted by this time. But, I don't want to punish you, or cross-examine you. You would like to find seriously and independently an honorable position for yourself. Am I right?

Ernest.

Don Julian, I—

Julian.

Answer!

Ernest.

(*Joyfully*) Yes!

Julian.

Well, here's a ready-made chance for you. I find myself without a secretary. I am offered one from London, but I only want (*with a tone of tender reproach*) a queer chap who prefers poverty, work, and regular wages—like any Tom, Dick or Harry,—to being the son of one who loves him like a father.

Ernest.

Don Julian—

Julian.

(*With a tone of mock severity*) But I am exacting, and a business man who never gives his money for nothing. I'm going to develop you to my taste, and make you work. You will only get what you're worth, too. Up at daybreak! Ten hours at your desk, and why, I'm going to be stricter with

you than Severo would be. So, before the world. you will be the victim of my selfishness. But, Ernest, you will always have the same place in my heart. (*Unable to control himself longer, as he says the last part of the speech, he changes his tone, and holds out his arms to Ernest.*)

Ernest.

(*Embracing him*) Don Julian!

Julian.

Do you accept?

Ernest.

Yes indeed!—Make anything you like of me!

Theodora.

(*To Julian*) At last you have tamed this wild beast!

Ernest.

(*To Julian*) And you did it all!

Julian.

That shows how much I think of you. Now I'll write to my good correspondent, thank him very much, as is natural, and tell him that I under-

stand the extraordinary merit of the Englishman of whom he boasts, but that it is too late, for I've already found a secretary. (*Goes toward door at lower left*) So much for now,—but after a proper amount of time,—you'll be my partner! (*As he turns, he says the above as though imparting a great secret.*)

Theodora.

(*To Julian*) For goodness sake keep still! Don't you see he's embarrassed?

(*Exit Julian at lower left, smiling and looking kindly at Earnest.*)

SCENE III

Theodora and Ernest. Towards the end of the last scene it begins to grow dark, so that at this moment, the room is completely darkened.

Ernest.

Your kindness overwhelms me. How can I ever repay you? (*He falls upon the sofa deeply moved. Theodora crosses to him and remains standing at his side.*)

Theodora.

By bidding adieu to coldness and distrust. By being just, and by believing that we really do love you; that what we were, we always will be to you.

And in a word, Ernest, that when Julian promises anything, he always keeps his word. So you will have in him a father, and in me, a sister.

Scene IV

Theodora, Ernest, Donna Mercedes, and Don Severo.. The last two appear up-stage and remain there for a few moments. The room is in darkness save for a little light at the balcony toward which Theodora and Ernest direct their steps.

Ernest.

How good you two are!

Theodora.

And what a child you are! After today, you musn't be sad anymore.

Ernest.

Never.

Mercedes.

(*Outside, and in a low voice*) My, how dark it is!

Severo.

(*The same*) Come, Mercedes.

Mercedes.

(*As she passes the door*) There's no one there.

Severo.

(*Stopping her*) Yes there is—*someone.*
(*They remain up stage looking on.*)

Ernest.

Theodora, I would gladly give my life, and a thousand others if I had them, for all the good you have done me. You musn't judge me by my gloomy moods. I don't like to boast about my love, but I know how to love—and to hate, too—Anyone can find in my heart exactly what he puts into it.

Mercedes.

(*To Severo*) What are they saying?

Severo.

Something I can't make out.
(*Theodora and Ernest go on talking in a low voice at the balcony.*)

Mercedes.

It certainly is Ernest.

Severo.

And she.—It must be she.

Mercedes.

Yes, it's Theodora.

Severo.

The same terms of endearment. They're always together. I have no patience with them. And the words they use!—what next?

Mercedes.

It's true. Come, Severo, it's a question of conscience now. Everyone says—

Severo.

(*Coming down stage*) I must speak to Julian right away—and plainly, too.

Mercedes.

The impudence of this boy.

Severo.

I should say so! The impudence of *both* of them!

Mercedes.

Poor girl—she's such a child. I'll take charge of *her*.

Theodora.

Go and live at another house? No indeed!—Leave us? I never heard of such a thing! Julian will never consent to it.

Severo.

(*To Mercedes*) Nor I either, by Thunder! (*Aloud*) Well, Theodora, didn't you see me? Is this the way to receive people?

Theodora.

(*Coming away from the balcony*) Don Severo! What a pleasure!

Mercedes.

Aren't you dining yet? Isn't it time?

Theodora.

Ah—and Mercedes too!

Mercedes.

Yes, I too, Theodora.

Severo.

(*Aside*) How well she dissembles! What a woman!

Theodora.

I'll have them bring in the lights. (*She strikes a bell upon the table.*)

Severo.

A good idea. One ought to be able to see clearly. (*A woman servant appears up-stage.*)

Theodora.

Lights, Genaro. (*Exit servant.*)

Severo.

He who follows the narrow path of duty and is always what he seems, is never annoyed by, and need never blush at a proper amount of light.

(*Enter servants with lights. They leave the room brilliantly illuminated.*)

Theodora.

(*After a slight pause she says naturally, and with a smile.*) That seems true to me, (*to Mercedes*) and indeed to anyone!

Mercedes.

Yes, of course!

Severo.

(*Meaningly*) Hello, Ernest! Why, were *you* here with Theodora when I came in?

Ernest.

(*Coldly*) I was here,—yes. That's easily to be seen.

Severo.

Not so easy as you might think, for it is very hard to see in the dark! (*Crosses to Ernest, takes his hand, and looks at him fixedly. Theodora and Mercedes converse at one side.*) (*Aside*) His cheeks are burning, and he seems to have been weeping. H'm. One only weeps in real life when one is a child,—or else—in love! (*aloud*) Where is Julian?

Theodora.

Why, he went into his room to write a letter.

Ernest.

(*Aside*) I've got a lot of patience, but this man is fast exhausting it.

Severo.

(*To Theodora*) I'm going to see him. Is there time before dinner?

Theodora.

Yes indeed—plenty!

Severo.

(*Aside—rubbing his hands together and looking at Theodora and Ernest.*) Good!—And now—to work! (*aloud*) Goodbye!

Theodora.

Goodbye!

Severo.

(*Aside, and looking at them spitefully as he goes out.*) H'm!

SCENE V.

Theodora, Donna Mercedes, and Ernest. The two women are seated on the sofa. Ernest is standing.

Mercedes.

(*To Ernest*) You haven't been to see us today.

Ernest.

No.

Mercedes.

You haven't seen Pepito, either.

Ernest.

No.

Mercedes.

He's all alone upstairs.

Ernest.

(*Aside*) And I hope he stays there!

Mercedes.

(*To Theodora—mysteriously*) I wish he would go, for I want to talk to you—

Theodora.

You?

Mercedes.

(*The same as before*) Yes—about something very serious.

Theodora.

Well, proceed.

Mercedes.

(*Still in a low voice*) Not unless he goes.

Theodora.

I don't understand you.

Mercedes.

Be brave, my dear. (*Takes her hand and presses it affectionately. Theodora looks at her in surprise, and uncomprehendingly*) Tell him to go.

Theodora.

If you insist—, why—(*aloud*) Ernest, would you do me a favor?

Ernest.

With all my heart.

Mercedes.

(*Aside*) With all his heart—and a little more besides!

Theodora.

Well, go upstairs to Pepito—but perhaps—I bother you with this message?

Ernest.

Not a bit of it.

Mercedes.

(*Aside*) How sweetly he says that to her!

Theodora.

See if he renewed the subscription for our box at the Royal as I told him to—you know.

Ernest.

With pleasure—I'm off.

Theodora.

Thanks, Ernest. I'm sorry to—

Ernest.

(*To himself, as he goes up stage.*) Well, great Heavens!

Theodora.

Goodbye!
(*Exit Ernest up stage.*)

SCENE VI

Theodora and Donna Mercedes.

Theodora.

"Something very serious!" You frighten me, Mercedes! Why this tone of voice—this mystery?

Mercedes.

It is a question of something very serious.

Theodora.

But about whom?

Mercedes.

About you.

Theodora.

About me?

Mercedes.

Yes.—You, and Julian, and Ernest.

Theodora.

All three of us?

Mercedes.

Yes.

(*Theodora looks at Mercedes in surprise. There is a slight pause.*)

Theodora.

Well, tell me—quickly.

Mercedes.

(*Aside*) Goodness knows it's hard enough, but I won't give up on that account. (*aloud*) We are

just like one big family. Your husband and mine are brothers. So we certainly ought always be ready to help and advise each other in one way or another. Today I cheerfully offer you my advice, and tomorrow we'll probably need yours.

Theodora.

Well, out with it, Mercedes, and for Heaven's sake get it done with!

Mercedes.

Until now, Theodora, I haven't wanted to take this step, but Severo said to me today: "I can't let it go any further; for I think as much of my brother's honor as I do of my own, and when I see certain things going on, I am sick with shame and grief. I'm always hearing little insinuations, always seeing smiles and lowered eyes, and I'm always having to avoid people. I tell you all this has got to stop, for I can't tolerate what they are saying in Madrid!"

Theodora.

Go on!—Go on!

Mercedes.

Well, listen, then.

(*A pause during which Mercedes looks fixedly at Theodora.*)

Theodora.

Come—what do "they say?"

Mercedes.

When the river murmurs, there's water flowing—more or less.

Theodora.

I don't care whether it murmurs or not, nor whether there is more or less water in it.—I only know I must be mad!

Mercedes.

(*Aside*) Poor child—how it hurts me to do this! (*aloud*) But,—don't you understand?

Theodora.

No—I do not!

Mercedes.

(*Aside*) She's slow, too! (*aloud—and with energy*) Why, they're laughing at him!

Theodora.

At whom?

Mercedes.

Whom do you suppose? At your husband.

Theodora.

(*Rising impetuously*) At Julian? It's all a lie! Whoever says that is a scoundrel.—Oh, if Julian only had his hands on him!—

Mercedes.

(*Calming her and making her sit down beside her again*) He'll have to get his hands on a number of people, for if rumor doesn't lie, everybody is of the same opinion.

Theodora.

But what is all this scandal? All this great mystery,—and what is it that the outside world is saying?

Mercedes.

Why,—does it annoy you?

Theodora.

It does.—But why?

Mercedes.

Theodora, you are still a child. At your age one —well, one may do something very foolish without

actually being wicked, and afterwards shed a few tears about it, and—but tell me, don't you understand yet?

Theodora.

No. Why should I? when it doesn't concern me.

Mercedes.

It concerns a scoundrel,—and a woman.

Theodora.

And her name—?

Mercedes.

It makes no difference what her name is.

(*Mercedes makes an effort to control herself. Theodora moves away from her toward the end of the sofa. Mercedes moves towards her when half way through her next speech. This double movement of repugnance and separation on Theodora's part, and of protection and insistence on Mercedes' part, is very marked.*)

The man is a despicable wretch and a traitor. He demands from the woman a whole life of sorrow for one hour of pleasure. Then comes the dishonor of the husband, followed by the ruin of the family, and heads bowed low in shame before disgusted society. This is the social, the outward penance. Besides this, there is the even more severe punish-

ment of God, who makes people suffer through the voices of their conscience.

(*They are now at the very end of the sofa. Theodora shrinks from contact with Mercedes. She leans back and covers her face with her hands, for now she understands.*)

Come to my arms, Theodora. (*Aside.*) Poor little thing! I'm sorry for her! (*Aloud.*) This man isn't worthy of you.

Theodora.

But what do you mean by this blind attack? I'm not a bit frightened,—nor are there tears in my eyes:—nothing but a burning fire! Who is it all about? Who is this man? Could it be—perhaps—

Mercedes.

Ernest.

Theodora.

Ah!—(*a pause.*) And I—I—am the woman—is it not so? (*Mercedes nods in the affirmative. Theodora rises.*) Well, then, listen—although it may anger you. I don't know which is more vile—the world which invented this, or you who repeat it to me. He must be wicked indeed who could make up such a thing—either wicked or an imbecile! Why I am contaminated by merely having had the idea pass through my head! God! I never thought about that! I never even imagined such a

thing! To see one whom I love as a brother,—so unhappy. Why Julian is his foster father,—and he—he is so noble, such a gentleman! (*Stopping herself as she notices Mercedes, and turning her face aside*) (*to herself.*) How she looks at me! I mustn't praise him in her presence. So—I must dissemble! Oh, dear! (*She is plainly troubled.*)

Mercedes.

Come, come! Be calm.

Theodora.

(*Aloud*) How heavy my heart feels,—and how cold! Oh, how unhappy I am! To be disgraced by public opinion in this way—Oh, mother!—Dear, dear, mother!—Julian! (*She falls sobbing into a chair at the right. Mercedes tries to console her.*)

Mercedes.

I never thought—forgive me—don't cry—I never seriously believed—why, I thought your past would vouch for you? But as it is, you must confess that ninety-nine out of a hundred will say rightly that you and Julian were very imprudent to give the public a chance to think—the worst. You—a young girl of twenty: Julian, in his forties: and Ernest with his mind full of fantastic ideas—your husband occupied with his business, and the other with his dreams—more opportunities than days,—and you with your thoughts idle—The people who saw you out walking, and who saw you in the theatre, did

wrong in thinking evil, but, Theodora, I believe in all justice and reason, in everything that has happened, the world placed the sin, and you two the opportunity for it. Let me tell you that the fault modern society punishes in man and woman with the greatest amount of anger and cruelty, and in the greatest variety of ways, is—and don't be astonished, Theodora,—is *rash imprudence!*

Theodora.

(*Turning to Mercedes, but not paying attention to her speech*) And you say that Julian—

Mercedes.

Is the laughing stock of the city. And you—

Theodora.

Don't bother about me. But Julian,—Oh dear! He is so good,—so kind. When he knows—

Mercedes.

He will know, for he is this minute talking with Severo.

Theodora.

What are you saying?

Julian.

(*Outside*) That will do!

Theodora.

My God!

Julian.

(*Still outside*) Leave me!

Theodora.

Oh dear—let's go away—quickly!

Mercedes.

(*After looking out of the door at L.*) Yes, quickly, for it is madness to stay here. (*They go towards the right.*)

Theodora.

(*Stopping*) But why? The next thing you know I'll be thinking *myself* guilty. Calumny doesn't only stain;—it degrades one! It is such a cursed product, that it takes possession of our consciences with the flavor of crime.

(*At this moment Don Julian appears at the door at L., and behind him, Severo.*)

Theodora.

Julian!

Julian.

Theodora! (*He runs to her and presses her passionately to his breast*) Here—in my arms is your place of honor!

SCENE VII

Theodora, Mercedes, Julian, and Severo. From right to left their positions are as follows: Mercedes, Theodora, Julian, and Severo. Theodora and Julian together—she is in his arms.

Julian.

This is the first time that anything like this has happened: but whoever again brings tears to her eyes (*indicating Theodora*) I swear,—and I never go back on my word,—that he will never again pass my threshold, even if he is my own brother. (*A pause during which Don Julian caresses and comforts Theodora.*)

Severo.

I only repeated what people are saying about you, Julian.

Julian.

Lies!

Severo.

Well, they may be!

Julian.

They are!

Severo.

Well, it only remained to tell what the whole city knows.

Julian.

Despicable lies, and mud!

Severo.

But to repeat it—

Julian.

Is no way to stop it. (*A short pause*)

Severo.

You're not right there.

Julian.

Yes, I am, and more than right. I must say it was good of you to bring the filth of the streets into my home.

Severo.

Well, it might be—

Julian.

It must *not* be!

Severo.

I bear your name, remember.

Julian.

No more!

Severo.

And your honor—

Julian.

Remember you are in the presence of my wife! (*Pause.*)

Severo.

(*To Julian in a low voice.*) If father were to see you now.

Julian.

What, Severo—what is this?

Mercedes.

Hush! Here comes Ernest.

Theodora.

(*Aside.*) Oh, the shame of it—If he should know! (*She turns her face away and bows her head. Julian looks at her closely.*)

SCENE VIII

Theodora, Mercedes, Julian, Severo, Ernest, and Pepito. The last two are up stage. From right to left their positions are: Mercedes, Pepito, Theodora, Julian, Ernest, and Severo. That is to say that when Ernest and Pepito enter, they separate. The former crosses to Julian, and the latter to Theodora.

Ernest.

(*Watching Julian and Theodora from up stage for an instant.*) (*Aside.*) He and she—I'm right. Do you suppose that what I feared has happened? (*Perhaps.*) What this fool told me wasn't his own invention after all. (*He refers to Pepito who enters at this point.*)

Pepito.

Salutations—and a good appetite to you all—for it's nearly dinner time. Here's your box, Theodora. Don Julian—

Theodora.

(*Taking the ticket merchanically.*) Thanks, Pepito.

Ernest.

(*In a low voice to Julian.*) What's the matter with Theodora?

Julian.

Nothing.

Ernest.

(*As before.*) She's pale, and looks as if she had been crying.

Julian.

(*Unable to restrain himself.*) Don't trouble yourself about my wife! (*A pause, during which Ernest and Julian look at each other.*)

Ernest.

(*Aside.*) Phew! This has certainly been a full day for me!

Pepito.

(*To his mother in a low voice, referring to Ernest*) He's wild! Just because I told him a certain little joke about Theodora, he wanted to kill me!

Ernest.

(*Aloud: sadly, but with a certain noble firmness*) Don Julian, I've been thinking over your generous

offer at my leisure, and although it is hard for me to say it, and although I know I am abusing your kindness, I'm afraid I must refuse it.

Julian.

Why?

Ernest.

Well, because I'm different from other people. I am a poet and a dreamer, and father never chose any particular career for me. I'm getting restless, and want to travel around a bit. You see, I can't bring myself to vegetate like most people. I'm an adventurous soul—a sort of a new Columbus! Ask Severo if I'm not right.

Severo.

You most certainly are. A long time ago I used to think the same way.

Julian.

So you feel a desire to travel, do you? Do you really wish to leave us? How about the wherewithal?

Severo.

Let him go wherever he pleases. The rest remains with you.—As much as you care to give him. I don't think he ever saves a penny.

Ernest.

(*To Severo.*) At least I don't say unpleasant things about people.—Nor will I accept any charity. (*Pause, to Julian*) Well, it's got to come sooner or later—this is a sad farewell, for we may never see each other again. So let's embrace before we part.—Forgive my selfishness. (*He is greatly moved.*)

Severo.

(*Aside*) How they stare at me!

Theodora.

(*Aside*) What a beautiful soul he has!

Ernest.

Don Julian, why do you hesitate? This is our last goodbye. (*He turns to Julian with outstretched arms. Julian receives him in his arms and they clasp each other in a strong embrace.*)

Julian.

No—neither the last, nor the first. It is just a sincere embrace between two honest persons. I don't want to hear any more about this crazy idea.

Severo.

But, isn't he going away?

Julian.

Never! I'm not going to change my mind and my plans every minute for the caprices of a boy, or the ravings of a madman. And it would be even a greater wrong to subject my actions to the silly gossip of this splendid city.

Severo.

But, Julian—

Julian.

That will do. The table awaits us.

Ernest.

Father, I can't—

Julian.

But I'm sure you can. Or does my authority displease you?

Ernest.

Don't!

Julian.

Let's go in, for it's high time. (*To Ernest*) Give your arm to Theodora, and bring her to the dining room.

Ernest.

To—Theodora? (*He looks at her and then starts back.*)

Theodora.

Ernest!

Julian.

Yes, as usual.

(*There is a movement of doubt and hesitation by them both. At last Ernest goes to her and Theodora leans upon his arm. But, they do not look at each other. They are embarrassed, greatly disturbed, and unnatural. This is recommended to the actors.*)

Julian.

(*To Pepito.*) Come, you—take your mother's arm. (*Pepito gives his arm to Mercedes.*) And next to me—my dear brother Severo. (*He leans upon him for a moment.*) And so to eat *en famille,* and may our cups overflow! Is there any one who whispers? Perhaps—but let 'em whisper,—or let 'em shout—I don't care a whit *what* people say! I wish I lived in a glass house so that the people who do so much talking could see Ernest and Theodora together. Then they'd see how much importance I attach to their lies and slander. Let them attend to their own business.

(*At this moment a man-servant dressed in evening clothes appears.*) Dinner?

Servant.

Is served. (*He opens the door into the dining room. One sees the table, the chairs, a lamp hung from the ceiling, etc. In short,—a luxuriously furnished dining room.*)

Julian.

Well, let us attend to prolonging our lives, while other people attend to bringing us to the grave.

Theodora.

Mercedes—

Mercedes.

Theodora—

Theodora.

Do you go ahead—

Mercedes.

No, after you people.

Theodora.

No, you go ahead, Mercedes.
(*Donna Mercedes and Pepito finally precede the others, and walk slowly into the dining room. Theodora and Ernest stay behind, as though they were*

absorbed in their own thoughts. Ernest is looking at Theodora.)

Julian.

(*Aside*) He is looking at her, and she is crying! (*They follow Mercedes very slowly. Theodora hesitatingly, and choking down her sobs.*) (*Aside to Severo.*) Are they talking to each other?

Severo.

I don't know, but I suppose so.

(*Ernest and Theodora stop and look around furtively. Then they go on.*)

Julian.

Why do they look at me like that?—Why?

Severo.

Now you are coming to your senses.

Julian.

I'm coming to your madness, you mean! Slander is unfailing; it goes straight to the heart!

(*He and Severo exit into the dining room.*)

Curtain.

ACT II

The scene represents a small and very modest room; it is almost shabby. A door in the background. At L another door. At R a balcony. A book-case with a few books in it: a table, and an arm chair. The table is at R. On it is a photograph of Don Julian, in a frame; opposite it is another frame like the first, but without a picture. Both frames are rather small. Also upon the table is an unlighted lamp, a copy of Dante's "Divine Comedy" open at the episode of Francesca, a piece of half burned paper, several loose sheets, and the manuscript of a play. There are a few chairs:—all the furniture is shabby—in keeping with the shabbiness of the apartment. It is day time.

Scene I

Don Julian, Don Severo, and a servant. They enter up stage.

Severo.

Is your master in?

Servant.

No, sir, he went out very early.

Severo.

Never mind. We'll wait for him. I suppose he'll have to come in sooner or later?

Servant.

Most likely. He is very punctual.

Severo.

Very well,—you may go.

Servant.

Yes, sir. If you wish anything, I shall be outside. (*Exit servant up stage.*)

Scene II

Don Julian and Don Severo.

Severo.

(*Looking about the room.*) What modesty!

Julian.

What *poverty,*—you might better say!

Severo.

My, what an apartment! (*He looks through the door at L. Then through the one in the background.*) An alcove without any exit; the anteroom, this study,—and there you stop your enumeration!

Julian.

And the Devil begins his. Human ingratitude, bastard sentiments, miserable passions, slander, and scoundrels. *He* couldn't finish if he talked a long, long time, and very fast in the bargain.

Severo.

Chance would have it so!

Julian.

That isn't the right name, brother; but I know who did wish it so.

Severo.

And who is that? I,—perhaps?

Julian.

You too. But, before you,—those empty fools who gossip openly about my wife and my honor. Then I myself, jealous coward and low wretch that I was, when I allowed this boy to leave my roof. This boy, who has proved himself as high minded as I have proved myself ungrateful.—Yes, —ungrateful! For where do you suppose I got my show and wealth, my luxurious apartments, my servants, my credit, and the very property which we are enjoying?

Severo.

I had almost forgotten.

Julian.

"Forgotten!" There you have it! That's the reward for every act of generosity that one man does for another if he does it quietly and unpretentiously as a friend!

Severo.

You aren't fair to yourself. Your gratitude amounts to so much that you have almost sacrificed your honor and happiness to it. What more can you do? What more could even a saint do? There's an end to everything: to the good as well as to the bad things. He's a proud chap, and he began it all;—although you deny that fact—Well, he's his own master—One fine day he left your comfortable apartments of his own free will, and came to live in this garret. He was desperate and disheartened. It is very sad, I suppose, but who can help it?

Julian.

Everybody, if they all minded their own business, and didn't go sticking their noses into other people's at the slightest provocation. What business is it of theirs if I pay a sacred debt by making him my son, and my wife his sister? Just because a young boy and a young woman are seen together out for a

walk, or at my table, or at the theatre, is it necessary to think evil of them, or to invent scandal about them? Is impure love the only tie between young men and women in this evil-minded world? Isn't there such a thing as friendship, gratitude. sympathy, and the like, that youth and beauty must always be united in filth? Even supposing that everything these idiots insinuate is true,—what need have I of them to avenge my wrongs? I have eyes to see with, ears to hear with, and a strong hand, a stout heart, and a keen blade with which to revenge myself.

Severo.

You are right. These people are wrong to gossip so, but I who am of your blood, and who bear your name,—should I have kept still?

Julian.

By Heavens, No! But you ought to have been more cautious. You should have come to me and told me quietly about the unfortunate affair, instead of starting a volcanic eruption in my house,—in my very bridal chamber!

Severo.

I did wrong only because I care for you so much. But though I recognize my fault, and though I confess that the world and I are to blame between us: the world for inventing the lies, and I for repeating stupidly to you the thousand echoes of the scandal:

—(*Drawing near him with an expression of interest and tenderness.*) I know that you, Julian, are clean, and free from all guilt. Your noble mind rejects and puts aside all mistrust.

Julian.

I can't forget the fact that I have given room in my heart to that very thing that my lips and my mind condemn. I repulse indignantly the slander of the world. "It lies," I say to myself.—And then, —"suppose it doesn't lie, and this is all true?" So that in this struggle between two contrary impulses, I am judge for the others, and at the same time their accomplice. I am exhausting myself by fighting against myself. This doubt grows and grows: my heart sinks, and a red mantle seems to be extending before my eyes.

Severo.

You're mad!

Julian.

No, I'm not mad, Severo; I'm merely showing you my inmost soul. Do you think that Ernest would have left my home if I had firmly made up my mind to stop him? He went because deep down within me a voice said,—"let him go, and don't ever let him come back, for it is a bad thing to show too much confidence in a question of this kind." I had one desire inside, and another on my lips. "Come back, Ernest," is what I said aloud;

—but at the same time I said to myself;—"No do *not* come back." While I appeared to be open and frank, I was really a cowardly hypocrite, and an ungrateful wretch. No, Severo, a true gentleman does not act like that. (*Throws himself dejectedly into the arm chair near the table.*)

Severo.

Nevertheless, that is the way a man acts who has a young, beautiful, and high-spirited wife.

Julian.

Don't talk like that about Theodora! She is like a mirror which becomes blurred by our breath if we come too near it. In this case, the mirror was reflecting the pure light of the sun before these vile creatures came close to look into it. Now they are contained in the glass within its divine frame as disembodied spirits; and when I frighten them away with my hand, you will see once more the clear blue of space.

Severo.

That will be still better.

Julian.

Not so!

Severo.

Well, then, what more do you want?

Julian.

A great deal more! All these internal conflicts which I have confessed to you, have made another person of me. Now my wife sees me always sad, and I always hold myself aloof. Try as I may, I cannot be the same as I have been. She is most likely asking herself, "Where in the world can the real Julian be?—Where is my dear husband?—What can I have done to lose his confidence?—What awful thoughts are tearing him away from my arms?"—In this way, it seems as though there were a shadow slowly forcing itself between us. No longer do we have our sweet confidences and quiet talks. Our smiles are forced and bitter. There is an unjust jealousy on my part, and bitter tears on Theodora's part. My own honor is wounded, and her womanly pride and tenderness are hurt by my hand.—And, there we are!

Severo.

Yes,—there we are—on the road to perdition! Why don't you remedy this evil if you see so clearly what is going on?

Julian.

All my efforts are in vain. I know that I am wrong to doubt her.—Although, I really do not doubt her—now. But, in the end, if I go on losing

ground little by little, and he goes on gaining it, who can tell!—What to-day we think is a lie, to-morrow may be the truth! (*Grasping Severo by the arm and speaking with concentrated energy and ill-contained jealousy*). I am jealous, gloomy, unjust and a tyrant. He is noble and generous, and always sweet and resigned,—with the halo of a martyr about his head—which is always pleasing to a woman's eyes. He most certainly plays the better role in this rather unfair drama. He gains what I lose—without my being able to do a thing. This much is certain: that although they may deny absolutely and truthfully their love for each other, —by constant repetition of that very denial, they will end by thinking that they *are* in love.

Severo.

Look here, Julian, I think the wisest thing to do is to let Ernest carry out his plans.

Julian.

But I came here to stop him!

Severo.

Well, you *are* crazy. He wants to go to Buenos Aires, doesn't he? Well, let him get aboard a boat and go—and may he have plenty of sails and fresh winds!

Julian.

Do you want me to appear ungrateful and miserably jealous in Theodora's eyes? Don't you know

that a man who is despised by a woman may some day come to be her lover,—but if that man happens to be the woman's husband,—he is dishonored? Do you want my wife to follow this unhappy exile across the bitter seas with her sad thoughts? Don't you know that if I should see the least sign of a tear on her cheeks, and should think that she was crying for Ernest, (*with fury*)—I would choke her between my two hands?

Severo.

Well then, what ought we to do?

Julian.

Suffer! For it remains with the world which started this affair by merely looking at us, to prepare the denouement of the drama. The eyes of society are fecund with both good and evil.

Severo.

(*Going up stage.*) I think some one is coming.

Servant.

(*Outside.*) He ought to be back directly.

SCENE III

Don Julian, Don Severo, and Pepito upstage.

Severo.

You here!

Pepito.

(*Aside.*) H'm! They must know all about it. I've been a fool! (*Aloud.*) Well, so we've all come! Hello, Uncle! Hello, father! (*Aside.*) No use! They know what has happened. (*Aloud.*) Well, I suppose you are looking for Ernest?

Severo.

Whom do you think—in this house?

Julian.

I suppose you keep yourself posted as to what this young fool is doing?

Pepito.

What he's do—? Why certainly, fairly well. I know—what everyone knows.

Severo.

And tomorrow he—?

Pepito.

No. He *sails* tomorrow. He has a little affair to attend to today.

Julian.

(*Bewildered.*) What are you saying?

Pepito.

I? Why what Pepe Uceda said last night at the casino, and he ought to know, for he is viscount Nebrada's second.—But why do you look at me like that? Don't you know?—

Julian.

(*Firmly, and restraining his brother from making a move.*) We know—all.

Severo.

But we—

Julian.

(*Aside to Severo.*) Hush, Severo. (*Aloud.*) We heard that he was leaving tomorrow, and that today,—he was to risk his life. So naturally, we came to prevent the duel.

(*During this scene, Julian pretends to know all about the affair, in order to draw Pepito out; although it is clear that he only came on account of Ernest's departure. All the details of the dialogue are recommended to the talent of the actors.*)

Severo.

(*Aside to Julian.*) What duel is that?

Julian.

(*Aside to Severo.*) I don't know, but we'll soon find out.

Pepito.

(*Aside.*) I guess I wasn't such a fool after all.

Julian.

We know that Ernest has arranged a duel—

Pepito.

Yes, that's right.

Julian.

With a certain viscount. Some one who was an eye witness told us about it. They say that it is a serious matter. (*Pepito makes a sign in the affirmative.*) A scandalous quarrel! And before a lot of people! (*The same, from Pepito.*) "You lie!"—"I don't!"—A whole torrent of words!

Pepito.

(*Interrupting with the pleasure and eagerness of one who knows more.*) Words! A slap in the face, you mean, and one hard enough to fell an ox!

Severo.

Who slapped whose face?

Pepito.

Ernest slapped the other fellow's.

Julian.

Ernest! (*To Severo.*) Don't you see? This viscount exhausted his patience: had him all worked up,—so, the poor lad lost control of himself.

Pepito.

Right you are!

Julian.

(*With great presence of mind.*) Certainly. I said that they told us all about it. (*With poorly contained anxiety.*) Is the affair serious?

Pepito.

Very. I'm sorry to say so, but it's useless to try to keep anything from you.

Julian.

What is the purpose of it? To what finish?—(*They approach Pepito anxiously. He pauses for a moment and then says with the air of one announcing bad news.*)

Pepito.

To the death! (*He looks at them triumphantly.*) (*Julian and Severo make a quick move.*) The vis-

count isn't frightened a bit. He's a wonderful swordsman!

Julian.

What caused the dispute? They say that Nebrada—

Pepito.

There was scarcely any dispute. I'll tell you all about it just as it happened. (*Pause. They draw near Pepito with a show of great interest.*) Ernest, planned to leave Madrid to-morrow, and he succeeded in getting his passage from Cadiz on the CID in plenty of time. Louis Alcarez promised him a letter which he said would be a good recommendation, so the poor boy went with the best of intentions to get it at a certain café. Louis wasn't there, so he waited for him. No one there knew him, so they went on with their sublime joy of slandering without paying any attention to a certain person with a tightly set jaw at Alcarez's table. People came and went—with generous hand and ready tongue. Every living person passed in review! And there in the midst of that smoky room, among cups of brandy, cigar ashes, and heaps of sugar, the marble tops of the tables were converted gaily into dissecting tables. For each woman dishonored a mug of musty ale: and for each jab of the scalpel, a light laugh. By four snips of the scissors, reputations were torn to shreds, and women were undone by those gay lads. However, what was the real meaning of it all? These café tables were giv-

ing back the echoes of society. I don't say that myself, nor do I think it; but Ernest said so when he was telling me about the affair.

Julian.

Finish it! Aren't you ever going to finish?

Pepito.

Well, among all the names, there was one name especially mentioned:—the name of a man. Ernest could control himself no longer. "Who dares to scoff at a man of honor?" he cried. They answered, "The woman!" Then they named a woman. Ernest, beside himself with fury, threw himself upon Nebrada, and—to make a long story short:—they fight with swords to-day in some hall or other, I don't know what.

Julian.

(*Seizing him roughly by the arm.*) And the man —was I?

Pepito.

Sir!—

Julian.

And Theodora,—was the woman? Oh, what will become of her, of my name, and of my love?

(*Sinks down upon the arm-chair and buries his face in his hands.*)

Severo.

(*Aside to Pepito*) What have you done, you fool!

Pepito.

Didn't he say he knew everything? Why, I thought because—

Julian.

I'm dishonored,—dishonored!!

Severo.

(*Crosses to him tenderly.*) Julian!

Julian.

It's true. I know I must be calm, but I lose my courage with my faith. (*Takes hold of his brother in his anguish.*) But why do they bring this disgrace upon us? What right have they to throw mud on us in this way? But, never mind, I know how to revenge myself as a gentleman should. Can I count on you, Severo?

Severo.

Can you count on me!—To the death! (*Presses his hand warmly.*)

Julian.

(*To Pepito.*) The duel?

Pepito.

Is at three o'clock.

Julian.

(*Aside.*) I'll kill him! Yes, I *must* kill him! (*To Severo.*) Come!

Severo.

Where to?

Julian.

To look for this viscount.

Severo.

What are you going to do?

Julian.

What I can—to avenge my honor, and to save the life of Juan Acedo's son. (*To Pepito.*) Who are Ernest's seconds?

Pepito.

Alcarez and Rueda.

Julian.

I know them both. (*To Severo, motioning to Pepito.*) Let him stay here in case Ernest comes back.

Severo.

Good idea!

Julian.

(*To Pepito.*) Try to find out where the duel is to be held without arousing his suspicions.

Severo.

(*To Pepito.*) Remember now!

Julian.

(*To his brother.*) Come on!

Severo.

Julian! What's the matter?

Julian.

I haven't felt so happy in a long time! (*Takes him nervously by the arm.*)

Severo.

The Devil! You're not in your right mind! "Happy?"

Julian.

Because I'm going to see this young man.

Severo.

Nebrada,—you mean?

Julian.

Yes. Remember that until today, this calumny has been impalpable, and I couldn't see it. Now at last I know where it is hidden. At last it has taken human shape, and comes to my hand in the form of a viscount! I have been swallowing impudence for three months, and now—imagine it—now I am face to face with the enemy!

(*Exeunt Don Julian and Don Severo up stage.*)

SCENE IV

Pepito.

Well sir! Here's a mix-up for you, and no reason for it, either! Though it was a bit of foolishness in spite of what uncle says, to keep under the same roof, and in almost continuous contact, a beautiful woman and a handsome lad like Ernest who has such a passionate temperament, and who is so given to romance. He may swear that there is nothing to it, and that he loves her with a pure brotherly love, and that he looks upon uncle as a

second father, but I who am pretty foxy, and who have seen a lot of the world in spite of my youth, take no stock in these "brother and sister" games! Especially when the "brother and sister" are both young,—and—not related! Well, suppose his love is what he says it is. What do the people know about that? What obligation have they to think well of anyone? Don't they see them together all the time; in the theatre, and out walking? Well, those who saw them,—saw them, and when they saw them,—they spoke about it. "But," Ernest swore to me, "we very seldom went out like that." If it were but once, that would be enough. If a hundred people saw them that one time, it's just the same as if they'd showed themselves a hundred different times. Must people have witnesses, and must they compare notes in order to prove that it was once or many times that these two were together in their pure sympathy and "brotherly and sisterly" affection? That's neither right nor just,—it's ridiculous! Everybody tells what they see, and they don't lie, either. "I saw them once," some one says. "And I another time," says another. One and one makes two—correct! "I too." Now we have three. And this fellow makes four, and that one five, and so on—*ad infinitum.* People see because they look, and in short, because those senses are made to use from time to time without thinking of your next door neighbor. Let him mind his own business, and remember that in our times, he who takes away opportunity, takes away calumny and danger at the same time. (*A short pause.*) Well, I grant the purity of his affection, and that is a serious thing—I think deeply when

I am alone—but to be near Theodora without loving her is to be an idiot. He may be wise, and a philosopher, and a physician, and a mathematician, but he has a human body, and she a divine one. All we need to have a guilty body is a "corpo di baco." If these walls could only talk, and Ernest's intimate thoughts take a tangible form!—Let's see,—for example, that frame is empty, and the other one has Julian's picture in it. He always had Theodora hanging beside Julian, before. Why should her photograph have disappeared? To avoid temptation? (*Sits down at table.*) Very bad!—if that's the case! But it would be worse if he took it away from there to give it a better place—next to his heart. Now—Oh you little devils who fly through the air weaving invisible threads, do you accuse this mystic philosopher, and take no compassion on him. (*Looking about the table he discovers the book of Dante.*) Here's another thing. More than once when I have come to see Ernest, I have found this beautiful book lying open on his desk. (*Reads.*) "Dante: Divine Comedy." His favorite poem. (*Looks again.*) And it seems he never gets past the passage which tells about Francesca. The thing can be explained in two ways: Either Ernest never reads at all, or,—he always reads the same thing. H'm—there's a spot as if a tear might have fallen on it. My, what deep dark mysteries! How difficult it is to be married and live quietly! Hello! A piece of burnt paper? (*Picks it up from the table or the floor.*) Not entirely burned, for it still has something on it. (*Rises and crosses to the balcony, trying to read the piece of paper. Enter Ernest at this moment. He stops to watch Pepito.*)

SCENE V

Pepito and Ernest.

Ernest.

What are you looking at?

Pepito.

Hello, Ernest! Why, a piece of paper which was floating about. The wind caught it up, and—

Ernest.

(*Taking it and giving it back after looking at it a moment.*) I don't remember what it was.

Pepito.

They were verses of some sort. You'll probably know what they are. (*Reading with difficulty.*)

"With burning love I do adore her"

(*Aside.*) H'm—that might rhyme with Theodora!

Ernest.

It might be anything.

Pepito.

(*Stops reading.*) That's all.

Ernest.

That little bit of worthless paper symbolizes our lives: a few cries of pain, and then—a handful of ashes.

Pepito.

But were they verses?

Ernest.

Yes. Sometimes when I don't know what to do, I let my pen wander at will, and last night, I wrote those lines.

Pepito.

And in order to help yourself along, you got your inspiration from this book of Dante's?

Ernest.

It seems to me—

Pepito.

You needn't say a thing. It is a wonderful piece of work, this episode of Francesca. (*Points to book.*)

Ernest.

(*Ironically and impatiently.*) You seem to be bound to find things out to-day.

Pepito.

Not everything: Right here where this book is opened there is something that I don't understand, and which I wish you would explain to me. The story goes that one day when they were all alone, Francesca and Paolo were reading a love story together to pass away the time. Then they came to a place where the author told very cleverly—and that shows he wasn't a bit slow—the story of Lancelot and his love for Queen Guinevere. This was too much for them. There was a kiss in the book, so Francesca, wild with passion, kissed Paolo full on the mouth in the same way. Thereupon the Florentine poet says with a rare gift of words and a sublime terseness, the passage you will find here and which I can not fathom: "For Galeoto was the book, and they read no further." That's all right, I don't doubt that they "read no further." But this Galeoto, why did he come in, and who was he? You ought to know, for I see it is the title of the play you are writing and which ought to bring you no end of fame. (*He points to some papers which appear to be the MS. of a play.*) Let's see it. (*Takes it up and examines it.*)

Ernest.

Galeoto was the go-between for Lancelot and the Queen. In love affairs, the "third party" can often be called "the Galeoto,"—and truthfully so,—especially if one wishes to avoid a name which may carry a sting for someone, or which may create a disturbance.

Pepito.

Well and good. I'll grant you that. But isn't there some appropriate word for it in good Castilian?

Ernest.

There is a very appropriate and a very expressive one. That trade which converts lasciviousness into money, which bargains in desires, and which lives on affections, has a name, and I know what it is, but it would be getting myself into great difficulty to make me say, and put into concrete form (*Points to drama*) what in the end I will not say. (*He snatches the drama from Pepito and throws it upon the table.*) In each special case, I notice there is one special Galeoto, but at times, the whole social mass is a Galeoto. Then he works unconscious of the fact that he is exercising such an office influenced by another vice of a very different aspect. But he is so clever in overcoming honor and modesty, that there never was seen, and never will be seen, a greater Galeoto. A man and his wife live together calmly and happily—fulfilling their duties with all their souls. Nobody notices them, and everything goes on marvelously well. But this does not last long in our fine city! For, one fine day it happens that they look at each other closely, and from that instant, either through stupidity or villainy, Society, without any object or motive, must needs take it upon itself to say that they are hiding some secret of impurity and wickedness. And, when all is said and every one has expressed his opinion, there is no

reasoning which will convince them, no man living who can persuade them, and the most honest men have no honor left. The horrible part about this thing is, that though in the beginning the man and his wife had no reason for being suspicious, they will most likely end by having one. Such a dense atmosphere surrounds the miserable wretches, such a torrent inundates them, and the pressure is so tremendous, that they are drawn together without realizing it, and joined without wishing it. They are bewildered when they fall, and infatuated when they die. The world was the battering ram which crumbled their virtues: the world brought on their disgrace. It was Galeoto, and—(*Aside*) what a thought of the Devil, that was! I am being consumed by his fire!

Pepito.

(*Aside.*) If Theodora rambles on like that, God help Don Julian! (*Aloud.*) I suppose all this was the theme of your last night's poetry?

Ernest.

Certainly.

Pepito.

You're wasting time with this stuff. You ought not to be doing nothing like this so unconcernedly! Why, you've got to cross swords pretty soon with Nebrada, and believe me, he's a wonder when he has a good sword in his hand! Isn't it the wiser

plan, and wouldn't it be much better if you were to practice up a few attacks, and try a few parries and repostes instead of worrying your head off over such and such a poor verse, and such and such a faulty rhyme? With all your sang froid, don't you realize that it is a serious thing to be pitted against the viscount?

Ernest.

No. And you'll find that I am right. If I kill him, the world is the winner: and if he kills me; —I win.

Pepito.

Good! That's better.

Ernest.

Don't let's speak any more about it.

Pepito.

(*Aside.*) Here's where I do some clever questioning. (*Drawing near to him. In a low voice.*) Is the duel today?

Ernest.

Yes,—today.

Pepito.

Are you going into the country?

Ernest.

No. It wouldn't be possible now. Everybody knows about the affair, and—

Pepito.

In some house, then?

Ernest.

Yes,—I suggested that.

Pepito.

Where?

Ernest.

(*Coldly and indifferently.*) Upstairs. In a large empty room with a side light. It is the best place possible for our purpose.

Pepito.

And now the only thing lacking is—

Ernest.

A sword.

Pepito.

I hear voices outside. Some one is coming. (*Goes up stage.*) Do you suppose the seconds are arriving?

Ernest.

Perhaps.

Pepito.

(*Looking out, goes to door.*) Sounds like a woman's voice.

Ernest.

(*Also up stage at door.*) I wonder what is keeping them?

SCENE VI

Ernest, Pepito, and a servant.

Servant.

(*Rather mysteriously.*) Some one asking for you, sir.

Pepito.

Who is it?

Servant.

A woman.

Ernest.

That's strange.

Pepito.

(*In a low voice—to servant.*) Did she make a fuss?

Servant.

(*The same—to Pepito.*) She is crying.

Pepito.

(*Aloud.*) Is she young?

Servant.

Really sir, I couldn't tell you. The ante-room was so dark, and the lady covered her face in such a way, sir, that it was next to impossible to see her; and she talked so low that I could hardly hear her, sir.

Ernest.

Who do you suppose she is?

Pepito.

Some one who wants to see you.

Ernest.

I can't imagine—

Pepito.

(*Aside.*) He's perplexed. (*Aloud.*) Well, I'll leave you. Good luck to you. (*He gives Ernest a warm hand clasp and picks up his hat. To servant.*) What are you waiting for, idiot?

Servant.

For him to tell me to show her in.

Pepito.

In matters like this, you should guess his intentions. Afterwards, don't open the door until the veiled lady comes out, if Heaven itself should fall.

Servant.

Then, shall I tell her to come in?

Ernest.

Yes. (*To Pepito who is standing in the doorway.*) Goodbye!

Pepito.

Bye-bye, Ernest. (*Exeunt Pepito and servant up stage.*)

Ernest.

A woman? What does she want—and why? (*A pause. Then enter Theodora, heavily veiled. She stands in the doorway.*)

SCENE VII

Theodora and Ernest. She is upstage, not daring to come further. He is down stage, and turning towards her.

Ernest.

You wish to speak to me? (*Motions to her to enter.*) If you will be so kind—

Theodora.

(*Lifting her veil.*) Forgive me, Ernest.

Ernest.

Theodora!

Theodora.

Am I doing wrong, do you think?

Ernest.

(*Embarrassed and stammering.*) I—I don't know—because—I am ignorant of the reason for

such an honor.—But—what in the world am I saying? (*Proudly.*) Your purity will find the deepest respect in my house—for now it can't be more than—respect! Why, are you afraid that anyone will speak ill of this visit?

Theodora.

I don't know. There was a time,—I'm afraid it has gone forever now—when I never would have given it a thought, Ernest, nor feared a thing. When I could cross a room clinging to your arm without a blush, and without any misgiving in my heart. If you were to leave for Argentina in those days, as they tell me you are leaving to-morrow, I would even have kissed you good-bye. In as much as those who go away may never return,—and as it is hard to lose a friend, I would have thrown my arms around your neck and said good-bye to you before Julian,—before the whole world, without ever giving it a second thought.

Ernest.

(*Starts forward—but controls himself.*) Ah, Theodora!

Theodora.

But now it is not the same. There is a gulf between us.

Ernest.

You are right, Theodora. We can't even love each other as a brother and sister now. Our hands

are stained if they even come near each other. What has been, is now a thing of the past. We must conquer: we must learn to hate each other.

Theodora.

(*Frankly, and as though shocked at the idea.*) Hate each other!—why?

Ernest.

Hate you? Did I say that, poor child?

Theodora.

Yes.

Ernest.

Don't mind what I say. But if ever the occasion should arise when I could give my life for you, Theodora, ask it—for to give my life for you would be to—(*Passionately at first: then he controls himself and says in a different tone of voice*) to pay a debt. (*Short pause.*) Hate! If I said such a thing it was because I was thinking evil; because I was thinking about the pain I have unwittingly brought on one who has done me so much good. You are the one to do the hating, Theodora, not I.

Theodora.

(*Sadly.*) Yes, you are right. It has made me very sad. (*Very sweetly.*) I can't accuse you,

Ernest, and nobody *would,* if they thought it over carefully. For why are you to blame for all this cold worldly gossip which has such a poisonous interest in our affairs? Why are you to blame for poor Julian's gloomy moods; for his anger—which is really grief; for his words which wound me deeply, or for the grief of which he is dying because he doubts my love?

Ernest.

(*Angrily.*) And that is what I cannot understand—especially in him. That is what drives me mad;—what I swear by the living God is not worthy of mercy, and what there is no excuse for hiding. That there should be any man alive who could doubt you!

Theodora.

Julian pays well for his proud distrust.

Ernest.

(*Taken aback at having accused Julian before Theodora.*) What am I saying? I—accuse him? Never! (*Hastens to take the blame away from Julian, and to smooth over the effect of what he said.*) He doubted as anyone who is in love *would* doubt. There is never any love without jealousy. Everyone has his doubting moments except God above, Theodora! It is human weakness. It is like being a treasurer who watches his gold because it

is gold, and because he fears for it. Why, if by some superhuman power I should succeed in making you mine, I myself would doubt—why, I wouldn't trust my own brother! (*With growing excitement: suddenly he stops when he notices that he is again falling into the same abyss from a different side, from which he has escaped once before. At this point Theodora hears voices off stage, and goes to the door.*) (*Aside.*) Where is this heart of mine leading me? What is there in the bottom of my heart? I say that the world slanders me, and here I am giving it a chance to be right!

Theodora.

Hush! Some one is coming!

Ernest.

It's scarcely two o'clock yet. (*Goes up stage to door.*) Can it be they?—

Theodora.

(*Terrified.*) That is Julian's voice! He may be coming here!

Ernest.

No—he has stopped.

Theodora.

(*Frightened, and as though asking Ernest.*) Yes —it *is* Julian? (*She makes a movement as though

to cross to the door at L. Ernest stops her gently but firmly.)

Ernest.

Yes, it is he. Our loyalty to him will shield us. But, if there is anyone else—any of the mistrusting people,—then, Theodora,—you may. (*He points at the door at L. Listening.*) I can hear nothing.

Theodora.

My heart is in my mouth!

Ernest.

Don't be frightened. Whoever wanted to come in has gone—or perhaps it was all imagination. (*Comes down stage.*) For heaven's sake Theodora!

Theodora.

(*Also coming down.*) I wanted to talk with you, Ernest, but time passes so quickly—

Ernest.

Yes,—it does indeed.

Theodora.

And, well,—I was saying—

Ernest.

Theodora, I beg your pardon, but,—perhaps it isn't prudent—if anyone should come,—and that is very likely—

Theodora.

I came just for that purpose—to prevent it.

Ernest.

Why?

Theodora.

Because I know all, and it frightens me to think of the blood you two are to shed for me. I seem to feel that blood burning in mine, and it seems to crowd against me—here! (*She presses her hand to her breast.*)

Ernest.

That is because it is insulted and wishes to hide itself until I kill the viscount! Do you want mud? Well you shall have some—made with blood!

Theodora.

(*Frightened.*) Are you going to *kill* him?

Ernest.

Yes. (*Preventing a movement of supplication from Theodora.*) Do with me what you will—I

am entirely at your disposal—except for one thing: —I will never feel compassion for Nebrada as long as I remember the insult he has given me.

Theodora.

(*Begging him with tears in her eyes.*) And for me?

Ernest.

For you?

Theodora.

Yes. The scandal will be horrible.

Ernest.

That's possible.

Theodora.

Possible! And you can say it like that without even trying to stop it;—when I myself beg you to!

Ernest.

I can't stop it, but I can punish it at my own risk. That is what I think and what I say—The other sought the insult, and now I seek the punishing of it.

Theodora.

(*Crossing to him; in a low voice as though afraid to hear herself.*) And Julian?

Ernest.

What of him?

Theodora.

Suppose he knew about it?

Ernest.

He *will* know!

Theodora.

What would he say?

Ernest.

What *would* he say?

Theodora.

That the husband who loves me should be the one to show such courage in my defence!

Ernest.

In a woman's defence! Why anyone who has any spark of honor in him would do it. All that is necessary is to hear a woman insulted. You don't have to know her, or be related to her, or be her friend, or her lover. Do you want to know why I'm going to fight this duel? Why I defended

you? Because I am myself! Who would hesitate at such a time, or think about his rights? Wasn't I there! Well, it was up to the first arrival!

Theodora.

(*Who listened to him attentively as though dominated by his energetic words. Goes to him and presses his hand impetuously.*) That is noble and dignified,—and worthy of you, Ernest! (*She stops; goes away from him, and says sadly, but with conviction.*) But Julian will be humiliated by all this, Ernest.

Ernest.

Humiliated?

Theodora.

Yes indeed!

Ernest.

But why should he be?

Theodora.

For no reason at all.

Ernest.

Who told you about it?

Theodora.

Everybody.

Ernest.

But why?

Theodora.

When they heard that I had been insulted, and that my husband was not the one who did the punishing, and moreover—(*Lowering her voice and hanging her head as she evades his eyes*) that it was you who took his place,—why that gave rise to still another scandal.

Ernest.

(*Convinced, but protesting.*) If one always had to think of what people will say, there'd be no use living.

Theodora.

But it is as I tell you.

Ernest.

So it is: but at the same time it is horrible.

Theodora.

Do give it up!

Ernest.

Impossible!

Theodora.

I beg you to!

Ernest.

No. And if you look at it right, Theodora, happen what may, and you never know what is in store for you, it is much better for *me* to meet this confounded viscount; for what he lacks in honor, he makes up in swordsmanship.

Theodora.

(*Somewhat piqued at the rather humiliating protection which Ernest offers to Julian.*) My husband is also brave.

Ernest.

Just my luck! Either I explain myself badly, or you don't understand me very well. I know what a brave man he is, but between courageous men, when there is an outrage against reputation and honor, no one can tell what may happen, nor who will win, and who will die. (*Sincerely, but sadly.*) So if this man is going to win in this unhappy duel, why there's no doubt that *I* ought to be elected to die, rather than Julian.

Theodora.

(*With real anguish.*) You? No, not that either!

Ernest.

Why not, if it is my fate? No one would lose by my death, I myself would lose but little.

Theodora.

(*Unable to hold back the tears.*) Don't say that, for Heaven's sake!

Ernest.

Well, what would I leave in the world? What friendship? What great love? What woman would follow my body and weep for me as for a lost sweetheart?

Theodora.

(*Still weeping.*) All last night, I was praying for you,—and you say that no one—(*Suddenly.*) I don't *want* you to die!

Ernest.

Oh, you would pray for anyone. (*Passionately.*) But you would only weep for one alone!

Theodora.

(*Surprised.*) Why Ernest!

Ernest.

(*Frightened at his own words.*) What is it?

Theodora.

(*Leaving him.*) Nothing!

Ernest.

(*Timidly bowing his head and drawing away from her.*) I—I told you a little while ago that I was mad—don't pay any attention to me. (*A pause. They remain silent and thoughtful some distance apart, and not daring to look at each other.*)

Theodora.

(*Pointing to the door.*) Again!

Ernest.

(*Looking in the direction in which she points.*) Someone has come!

Theodora.

(*Going up stage to the door and listening.*) And they want to get in—

Ernest.

(*The same.*) There is no doubt this time. (*Points to door of other room.*) In there, Theodora!

Theodora.

I am doing this to save my honor!

Ernest.

Never mind. It isn't your husband.

Theodora.

Isn't it Julian?

Ernest.

No. (*Pushes her toward the door at L.*)

Theodora.

I was hoping—(*Stops at the door to beg him*). Give up this duel.

Ernest.

But, great Heavens, I struck him in the face!

Theodora.

I didn't know that. (*Desperately, but seeing that such an arrangement would be impossible*). Then run away.

Ernest.

I—run away?

Theodora.

For my sake—for Julian's sake—for God's sake, —go!

Ernest.

I could stand having him hate me, (*Desperately*) but to have him despise me—never!

Theodora.

Just one word more. Are they coming for you?

Ernest.

It isn't time yet.

Theodora.

Are you sure?

Ernest.

Yes. Theodora, do you hate me?

Theodora.

Of course not!

Pepito.

(*Outside.*) No—I must see him!

Ernest.

Quick!

Theodora.

(*Goes into the next room.*) Very well.

Pepito.

(*Still outside.*) Who dares stop me?

Ernest.

Ah! Calumny appears, and makes the guilt a real one.

SCENE VIII

Ernest and Pepito. The latter up stage, hatless, and very much excited.

Pepito.

Go to the devil! I *will* go in! (*Calls.*) Ernest! Oh, Ernest!

Ernest.

What's the matter?

Pepito.

I don't know how to tell you,—although I must.

Ernest.

Well, go ahead!

Pepito.

My head's going 'round and 'round. Great God, who would have thought it!

Ernest.

What happened? Tell me quickly and clearly.

Pepito.

What happened? Why, a very unfortunate thing! (*Rapidly.*) Don Julian knew about the duel. He came to look for you, and you weren't here. He went to see your seconds:—then they all went to the viscount's house.

Ernest.

Nebrada's? But why?

Pepito.

Yes, that's it! Don Julian would do it! He went about spouting reasons, and determinations—everything—

Ernest.

Go on—finish!

Pepito.

(*Drawing away from Ernest and going up stage.*) They're coming up now!

Ernest.

Who?

Pepito.

Why, *they* are—(*Looks out.*) They're carrying him in their arms.

Ernest.

You frighten me! Go on,—and be quick about it! (*Takes him violently by the arm and drags him down stage.*)

Pepito.

He forced him to fight—there was no other way: and the viscount said, "very well then, both of them." Then Don Julian came here—your servant told him that you were here with a woman and that nobody could go in—nobody.

Ernest.

And then—?

Pepito.

Don Julian went down stairs and said: "All the better—that I should have the whole day."

Then he, Nebrada, the seconds, my father, and I—for I arrived at that moment—all went upstairs—you know—

Ernest.

And they fought?

Pepito.

Furiously! Like two men who were crazy to tear each other's hearts out.

Ernest.

And Don Julian?—No!—You must be wrong!

Pepito.

Here they are now.

Ernest.

Hush! Tell me who it is, and tell me quietly.

Pepito.

This way!

(*Don Julian, Don Severo, and Rueda appear up stage. They carry Don Julian badly wounded between them. The order from right to left is: Severo, Julian, and Rueda.*)

Ernest.

God help me!

SCENE IX

Ernest, Don Julian, Don Severo, Pepito, and Rueda.

Ernest.

Don Julian! My benefactor! My friend! My father! (*Rushes sobbing to meet him.*)

Julian.

(*In a weak voice.*) Ernest—

Severo.

Be quick!

Ernest.

Father!

Severo.

The pain is killing him.

Ernest.

All this—for me!

Julian.

Not necessarily.—

Ernest.

For me! Oh, forgive me! (*Taking Julian's right hand, he falls on his knees.*)

Julian.

That's not necessary. You did your duty, and I did mine.

Severo.

A bed! (*Letting go of Julian, Pepito takes his place.*)

Pepito.

(*Points to door at L.*) Let's go in there.

Ernest.

(*In a terrible voice.*) Nebrada!

Severo.

No more madness! Or do you want to end by killing him?

Ernest.

Madness? We'll see! (*In a frenzy.*) Oh—let them both come,—it is my right! (*Hurries up stage.*)

Severo.

(*Crossing to L.*) Take him to your bed room—on your bed.

(*Ernest, who is up stage, stops. He is frightened.*)

Ernest.

Where— did you say?

Severo.

In there.

Pepito.

Yes!

Ernest.

No! (*He rushes and covers the door with his body. The two who carry Julian, who is almost fainting, stop, surprised.*)

Severo.

Do you deny him this?

Pepito.

You're crazy!

Severo.

Stand aside! Don't you see? He's dying!

Julian.

(*Half rising, and looking at Ernest with mingled surprise and fear.*) But what do you say? You don't want me to—

Rueda.

I don't understand!

Pepito.

Nor I!

Ernest.

He's dying—and asks me—he doesn't trust me! Oh, father!

Severo.

You *must!*

(*Behind Ernest's shoulder, the door is thrust open and Theodora appears.*)

Ernest.

My God!

Severo and Pepito.

She! ! !

Rueda.

A woman!

Theodora.

(*Throwing herself upon him and kissing him.*) My Julian!

Julian.

(*Withdrawing from her so as to see her, and by a tremendous effort standing up alone.*) Who is it? —Theodora! ! !

(*Falls senseless to the floor.*)

Curtain.

ACT III

The same scene as in Act I: Instead of the sofa, an easy chair. It is night: a lighted lamp upon the table.

Scene I

Pepito.

At last the crisis is passed. At least, I don't hear anything. Poor Don Julian! Too bad—too bad! His life is in a balance: on one hand death, and on the other—death of a different sort. The first is the death of honor—the second is that of the body! Two abysses—deeper than a hopeless love. The devil! Here I am mixed up in a household tragedy much more romantic than any written in blank verse. Why, I've got a jumble in my head of scandals, duels, deaths, treachery, and dishonor—all mixed up together! Heavens, what a day!—And what a night! And the worst is yet to come! (*Short pause.*) It certainly was a foolhardy thing too, to remove him and bring him here in such a condition. But what can you do?—Who can oppose my uncle when he once has an idea firmly fixed in his head? And I don't know but what he's right. Nobody with any honor in him, or with a spark of life left in him would have stayed in that house under those circumstances. And he certainly is a man with right ideas about such things.—Who's coming? (*Goes up stage.*)

Oh—it's mother.

SCENE II

Pepito and Mercedes—up stage.

Mercedes.

Where's your father?

Pepito.

He hasn't left uncle a second. I always thought he was fond of him, but I never dreamed his affection was as strong as this. Oh if anything should happen!

Mercedes.

And your uncle?—

Pepito.

He's suffering quietly. Sometimes he calls out Theodora's name in a hoarse voice, and sometimes it is Ernest's. Then he rumples up the sheets with his hands. Then he is as still as a statue and gazes into space, while the cold death sweat stands out upon his forehead. All of a sudden his terrible fever seizes him—he sits up in bed—listens attentively—and says that "he" and "she" are waiting for him. Then he starts up and tries to get out of bed; and it is only by means of tears and prayers that father is able to calm his fears. "Calm them," did I say? No—because he is angry to the very core, and his very thoughts are a-fire! Come, moth-

er, I hate to see you look so. Your mouth looks drawn and tired, and your eyes have great dark rings about them, as though they reflected the shadows of the room.

Mercedes.

How was your father when you saw him?—

Pepito.

Groaning and swearing to have vengeance. *He also* keeps crying-out "Theodora" and "Ernest." God keep him from meeting them, for if he should —who could ever cool his anger?

Mercedes.

Your father is a very good man.

Pepito.

Very—but such a temper! Phew!

Mercedes.

That's true. He very seldom gets angry, but when he does—

Pepito.

He's a regular Bengal tiger—with all due respect to him!

Mercedes.

He's always in the right, though.

Pepito.

I don't know if he *always* is, but this time he's right. But where is Theodora?

Mercedes.

She's upstairs. She wanted to come down—and wept— why, she's a regular Magdalen.

Pepito.

Yes! Has she repented—or is she still untrue?

Mercedes.

Don't say that, my son! She is only a child!

Pepito.

Who is killing Don Julian in her sweet, pure innocence! Well—if you are right, and she *is* a child, and does such a thing in her childhood—God help us when she grows up!

Mercedes.

It's hardly her fault. Your young friend of the plays—the poet—the dreamer—the—the scoundrel! —*He* was the cause of the whole thing!

Pepito.

Well, I don't deny it.

Mercedes.

What is he doing.

Pepito.

Doing?—Well, just at present, Ernest is running about the streets trying to get away from his conscience.

Mercedes.

But has he *got* one!

Pepito.

Possibly!

Mercedes.

How sad!

Pepito.

Disgraceful!

Mercedes.

Such a disillusion!

Pepito.

Cruel!

Mercedes.

What treachery, too!

Pepito.

High-handed!

Mercedes.

What a scandal!

Pepito.

Unequalled.

Mercedes.

Poor Julian!

Pepito.

Rotten luck!

SCENE III

Donna Mercedes, Pepito, a servant.

Servant.

(*Announcing.*) Don Ernest.

Mercedes.

And he dares!—

Pepito.

Shocking audacity.

Servant.

I thought—

Pepito.

Well—you thought wrong!

Servant.

He came in alone. He told the cabby who brought him that he was coming back and to wait for him. So I—

Pepito.

(*Consulting his mother.*) What's to do?

Mercedes.

Tell him to come in. (*Exit servant.*)

Pepito.

I'll get rid of him.

Mercedes.

See that you do it cleverly.

SCENE IV

Donna Mercedes, and Pepito: Ernest up-stage. Donna Mercedes seated in the easy chair; across from her, and standing, is Pepito: a bit up-stage is Ernest. They do not turn to greet him.

Ernest.

(*Aside.*) Disdain, hostile silence, and mute surprise! Through no fault of my own I am a monster of evil and insolence in everyone's eyes—for they all despise me!

Pepito.

(*Turning towards him, speaking coldly.*) Listen Ernest.—

Ernest.

What is it?

Pepito.

(*With the same coldness.*) I want to tell you—

Ernest.

To leave—perhaps? (*Changing his tone.*) I? —God, what a thought!—(*As though looking for

something to say.) I was going to ask—nothing else—it is true—that is—afterwards—the viscount—and I.

Pepito.

You—you fought him?

Ernest.

(*In a low voice—and bowing his head.*) Yes. I was mad—They came down stairs—I stopped them—we went up stairs again, and closed the door. Two men—two seconds—then—I don't know what happened!—two grating blades—a cry, a thrust, a sigh—and—and—a spurt of blood! An assassin on his feet,—and a man on the floor!

Pepito.

The Devil you say! You're a good swordsman—did you hear, mother?

Mercedes.

Ugh! Still more blood!

Pepito.

Nebrada deserved it.

Ernest.

(*Crossing to her.*) Mercedes—for pity's sake—one word! Don Julian—is he—oh if you only

knew my agony—how I have suffered—what do they say about him?

Mercedes.

That he is mortally wounded, and that the nearer you get to his bed, the more it irritates him.—Leave this house!

Ernest.

I want to see him.

Mercedes.

Leave instantly!

Ernest.

I refuse!

Pepito.

The insolence of him!

Ernest.

(*To Pepito.*) It is very becoming to me. (*To Mercedes—respectfully.*) Forgive me, but I am only what others wish me to be.

Mercedes.

For Heaven's sake, Ernest!

Ernest.

Look, Mercedes, when a man like myself is trampled underfoot, and is declared a scoundrel, without any reason for it, and when he is led—*forced*—to commit a crime—the struggle is dangerous—for everybody. Not for me, however, for, in a hard fight against invisible forces, I have lost honor, love, and affection. All I can lose now is a foothold in this insipid and monotonous existence. I only came here to find out if there is any hope—that's all—no more! Well, then—why do you deny me this consolation? (*Begging.*) Just one word!

Mercedes.

They say—that he is better.

Ernest.

But is that really so? You're not deceiving me? Are you sure? How kind—and how good you are! Is it really true that he is saved?—That he won't die?—That he is coming out happily? He will forgive me! He'll embrace me again! And I'll *see* him!

(*He falls into a chair near the table—buries his face in his hands, and sobs violently. A short pause.*)

Mercedes.

If your father should hear him and come in!—(*She rises, and she and Pepito cross to Ernest.*) (*To Ernest.*) Come—be a man! Be brave!

Pepito.

Think of a man—crying! (*Aside.*) These nervous fellows are terrible. They cry and kill in the same way!

Ernest.

If I am weeping, if my throat is choking with convulsive sobs, if I am weak as a woman or child, do not think that it is on my own account. I am weeping for him, and for Theodora, because of their lost happiness, their name which is ruined forever, and because of the insult I gave them in return for their loving kindness.—I'm crying because of my wickedness—and my ill luck! If I could wash away the past with my tears, great God!—I would weep out my very blood until there wouldn't be a drop left in my veins!

Mercedes.

Hush—for pity's sake!

Pepito.

Later on we'll talk about tears and sadness.

Ernest.

If everybody is talking to-day, why must *we* be silent? The whole city is a seething whirlpool which calls, absorbs, attracts, devours and drowns three honors, three names, and three persons. It

tosses them on a foam of laughter, rushes them through channels of human misery, to the abyss of social shame. And there sink forever the future, the fame, and the consciences of the three unfortunates.

Mercedes.

Not so loud—Ernest.

Ernest.

Why? For now there are voices, and no longer mere whispers. The air is thundering with them. There is no one now who is ignorant of the tragedy, but each one tells about it, wonder of wonders! But, unfortunately, no one knows the truth! (*Ernest rises. At his side are Mercedes and Pepito —intensely interested in what the city thinks.*) Some say that Theodora was surprised in my rooms by her husband, and that I rushed at him and stabbed him to the heart. Others—and these are supposed to be my friends—lift me from the position of a vulgar assassin to a more noble one and say that I killed him in a fair fight—in a regular duel! Nevertheless, there are *some* who know the story more exactly. These say that Julian took my place in the duel with Nebrada: that I was late in coming—either on purpose because I was afraid, or because I was in the arms of—no—my lips refuse to form the impure phrase, and my cheeks burn at the thought! Look for the dirtiest thing you can find, the lowest, the most infamous, the most repugnant, the mud and slime of the soul, the vile dross of

miserable minds, throw it to the four winds—hurl it into the streets—bespatter tongues and lips with it—and you will have the history of this episode; you will find in it what is left of two honorable gentlemen and a woman—when their honor has been discussed in the streets.

Mercedes.

It is a great shame, no doubt—but perhaps their opinion isn't *all* wrong.

Pepito.

Theodora went to your rooms—and she was there—

Ernest.

To stop the duel with Nebrada.

Pepito.

Well, then, why did she hide herself?

Ernest.

Because we feared her presence there would be misconstrued.

Pepito.

It's a very easy and a very simple thing to explain matters, Ernest. The hard thing is to make people

believe you. Because there is another thing which is very easy—

Ernest.

And which is more of a dishonor. And that is the good thing.

Pepito.

But you'll grant that if it wasn't wicked on Theodora's part—it was very thoughtless of her.

Mercedes.

Guilt is very prudent and very careful; while, on the other hand, innocence is very careless!

Ernest.

Well—you're right—what difference does all this slander make? What's the good of it anyhow? The horrible part of it is that thought itself is corrupted, when it comes in contact with a vile idea! That the mind by merely *thinking* of guilt becomes familiar with it! For it looks repugnant and horrible, especially at night—in the dark! This is indeed true! (*Aside.*) Why—why are they listening to me with such a curious and intense expression on their faces? (*Aloud.*) Being who I am, and bearing such an honored name, if I killed Nebrada only because he lied—because his calumny was turning into the truth—what *wouldn't* I do if I were really at fault?

Pepito.

(*Aside to Mercedes.*) He denied it once—that's clear.

Mercedes.

(*To Pepito.*) There's some discrepancy here.

Pepito.

The truth is—he's confessing.

Mercedes.

(*Aloud.*) Please leave us, Ernest.

Ernest.

I can't. If I could not be at his bedside tonight I would lose my mind—my reason.

Mercedes.

But if Severo should come and see you here?

Ernest.

What difference does that make? He is a loyal friend—all the better—let him come! Let him who fears—run away, and he who fears, let *him* deceive. It isn't easy for me either to run, or to fear.

Pepito.

(*After listening a moment.*) Some one is coming.

Mercedes.

It's Severo!

Pepito.

(*Going up stage.*) No it isn't. It's Theodora.

Ernest.

Theodora!—Theodora!—I want to see her!

Mercedes.

(*Severely.*) Ernest!

Pepito.

Ernest!

Ernest.

Yes! In order to beg her forgiveness.

Mercedes.

Don't you realize?—

Ernest.

I realize everything, and understand everything. We two together? Ah no! Enough: don't be afraid. To give my blood for her—to give my life

—my future—my honor and my very conscience is all very well! But to *see* her again is impossible. A bloody mist is rising between us!

(*Goes out, R.*)

SCENE V

Donna Mercedes and Pepito.

Mercedes.

Go and join your father and leave me alone with her. I want to search out her very heart, and what I say to her I know will make a very deep impression upon her.

Pepito.

Well, I'll leave you two together, then.

Mercedes.

Goodbye.

Pepito.

Goodbye. (*Exit at L.—up stage door.*)

Mercedes.

Now I must get my plan in working order.

Scene vi

Theodora and Mercedes. Enter Theodora timidly. She stops near Don Julian's door and listens anxiously, smothering her sobs in her handkerchief.

Mercedes.

Theodora—

Theodora.

(*Crossing to her.*) Is it you?

Mercedes.

Be brave, my dear. What good is it going to do you to cry?

Theodora.

How is he? Oh—how is he? Tell me the truth!

Mercedes.

Much better.

Theodora.

Will he live?

Mercedes.

Of course he will.

Theodora.

Oh God! I'd give my life for him!

Mercedes.

(*Brings her affectionately down stage.*) After this—I trust in your common sense—for I can see plainly by the way you are crying, and by your anxiety, that you repent—

Theodora.

(*Donna Mercedes sits down. She appears a bit suspicious.*) Yes, it was wrong, I suppose, to go to see him. (*Displeasure on Mercedes' part when she sees that it isn't the kind of repentance she thought it was.*) But last night you told me about the insult and the consequent duel, and—well—I'm much obliged for your kindness, although you never can imagine what trouble it caused me,—nor can I very well tell you. Oh, what a night I've had! (*Clasps her hands and looks up.*) He was delirious—and how he groaned! How angry he was! The scandal, the insult, the blood, the duel—everything came before me. And then—poor Ernest, perhaps dying for me—But why do you look at me like that? Is there any harm in that? Or aren't you convinced yet? Are you like all the rest?

Mercedes.

(*Dryly.*) I think that it was not necessary for you to fear for this fellow Nebrada's life.

Theodora.

No. Nebrada is a famous swordsman. You see, Julian—

Mercedes.

Julian is now avenged, and the great duelist lies dead with a sword in his heart. So that (*harshly and with meaning*) your fears and doubts were groundless.

Theodora.

And it was Ernest who—

Mercedes.

Yes—it was Ernest.

Theodora.

Met the viscount.

Mercedes.

Face to face!

Theodora.

(*Unable to control herself.*) How noble and brave of him!

Mercedes.

Theodora!

Theodora.

What is it?

Mercedes.

(*Severely.*) I can guess your thoughts.

Theodora.

My thoughts?—

Mercedes.

Yes.

Theodora.

What do you mean?

Mercedes.

You know well enough!

Theodora.

I was wrong in showing my happiness at hearing that Julian was avenged, but the impulse was so strong that I couldn't keep it back.

Mercedes.

No—it isn't what you think it is.

Theodora.

Do you know better than I myself?

Mercedes.

(*With very deep meaning.*) When you admire a man very much—you are on the road to loving him.

Theodora.

You mean that I admire—

Mercedes.

The courage of this boy.

Theodora.

I admire the nobility of him.

Mercedes.

It's all the same thing—That's the way it begins.

Theodora.

Why, this is madness!

Mercedes.

Yes—but in you—

Theodora.

Always the same wicked idea! Is there no let-up? I feel an infinite amount of pity for him.

Mercedes.

For whom?

Theodora.

For Julian. Whom did you suppose?

Mercedes.

Haven't you ever heard that pity—and forgetfulness go hand in hand in women?

Theodora.

Hush—for goodness sake, say no more!

Mercedes.

I want to shed a little light on your conscience from my own experience: the light of truth. (*Pause.*)

Theodora.

I'll listen to you—but as I do so you no longer seem like a mother, a sister, or even a friend. Your

words sound as if it were Satan himself talking through your lips. Why do you want to convince me that my love for my husband is growing smaller, and that a rival love which is impure is taking its place in my heart? Why, I love him as much as I always have! I would give every drop of blood in my body for one spark of life in him (*Points to Julian's door.*) from whom you are separating me! If your husband would let me, I would rush in there now, and,—sobbing all the while—clasp him in my arms so passionately that all his doubts would be melted by the very heat of my love. And because I adore Julian, why must I hate, and appear ungrateful to one who risked his life nobly and generously for me? Must I be in love with him because I do not hate him? Heaven help me!— That is what the world thinks! I hear such strange tales, see such sad things, such slander threatens me —that at times I almost doubt myself, and frightened to death, I ask myself if I am what everyone says I am? And if I am hiding in my heart a bastard passion which will some sad day break out and destroy me?

Mercedes.

Then, are you telling me the truth?

Theodora.

Of course I am!

Mercedes.

And you don't love him?

Theodora.

Look here, Mercedes, I don't know how to persuade you. Such a question at any other time would make me very angry, but now you see I am discussing calmly whether or not I am honest. But is this really being honest in my heart of hearts? *No!* To suffer such humiliation is to deserve the stain! (*She falls upon the arm chair at L. and covers her face with her hands.*)

Mercedes.

Don't cry any more: I believe you. There, there—don't cry, Theodora. I only want to tell you one thing more. And that is, that Ernest isn't what you think he is. He doesn't deserve your confidence.

Theodora.

He is good, Mercedes.

Mercedes.

No.

Theodora.

And he loves Julian.

Mercedes.

He is deceiving you.

Theodora.

Again? For goodness' sake!

Mercedes.

I don't say that you would listen to his passion; but—*he loves you!*

Theodora.

(*Rising with surprise.*) He—loves me?

Mercedes.

We all know it, too. A moment ago in this very room, before me and my son—now you see?—

Theodora.

(*Painfully.*) Very well—go on. What then?

Mercedes.

Why he made a regular confession. In a rapid flow of words he swore that he would give life, honor, conscience, and soul for you! When you came, he wanted to see you, and it was only by dint of much pleading and persuasion that I succeeded in getting him to leave the room. Now I am on pins and needles for fear that he will meet Severo and that they won't be able to control their anger. So—*now* what do you say? (*In spite of herself,*

she speaks these lines with a strange mixture of concern, surprise and terror—something indefinable.)

Theodora.

Great Heavens! Can such infamy be true? I, who felt and professed for him such—a real affection!

Mercedes.

Are you crying again?

Theodora.

There is no need of weeping for the deceitfulness of this unhappy life. To see such a pure noble fellow sink so low—And you say that he is in the very next room. He—Ernest! Heaven help me! Look, Mercedes—Mercedes—He must leave this house at once!

Mercedes.

(*With real joy.*) That's what I say too. Your energy is certainly pleasing to see! Forgive me, for now I believe you. (*Embraces her effusively.*)

Theodora.

And you didn't before?
(*The actress will give to this phrase, all the meaning which the author has wished it to have.*)

Mercedes.

Hush! He's coming.

Theodora.

(*Impetuously.*) I don't want to see him! You tell him—Julian is waiting for me. (*Crosses to L.*)

Mercedes.

(*Stopping her.*) Impossible—you know—he does not respect my orders. Now that I know exactly how you feel, I'm glad that he will find the same contempt in you which he has hitherto always found in me.

Theodora.

Leave me!

Ernest.

(*Stops in the door.*) Theodora!

Mercedes.

(*Aside to Theodora.*) It's too late. Do your duty, and that's all. (*Aloud to Ernest.*) What I told you a moment ago, Theodora, as head of this house, will repeat to you.

Theodora.

(*In a low voice to Mercedes.*) Don't leave me.

Mercedes.

(*The same—to Theodora.*) Why, are you afraid?

Theodora.

I, afraid? No, indeed!

(*She signals to Mercedes to go out. Exit Mercedes at L.*)

SCENE VII

Theodora and Ernest.

Ernest.

What she told me was that I should leave.

(*Pause. They are both silent, and dare not look at each other.*)

And you—do you repeat it?

(*Theodora nods her head in the affirmative—but does not look at him. Sadly and respectfully.*)

Well, never fear, Theodora, I'll go.

(*Harshly.*) I will not obey the others, no matter how much it may grieve them. But from you—even if you should insult me—from you—I would suffer anything.

Theodora.

(*Without looking at him, vexed and frightened.*) Offend you, Ernest!—Never! Why, do you think that I—

Ernest.

No, I do not believe it. (*A pause.*)

Theodora.

(*Without turning to him nor looking at him.*) Goodbye—I—I only wish you happiness.

Ernest.

Goodbye, Theodora.

(*He stops a moment but Theodora does not turn, nor does she lok at him—nor put out her hand. At last he starts off. After he gets up stage he turns and comes down to her. Theodora feels that he is coming, and trembles; but she does not look at him.*)

If I could wipe out with my death all the trouble I have caused you, which was in spite of anything I could do, and on account of my cursed luck—I swear as I am a gentleman that I wouldn't leave one single shadow of the past, nor one sigh of grief. (*Theodora lifts her head and looks at him.*) There would be no cause left for you to be so pale, nor for you to look so terrified. (*She chokes back a sob.*) Nor would there be cause for a single sob in your throat, or a single tear on your cheek.

Theodora.

(*Aside.*) Mercedes was right—and I was blind.

Ernest.

Just one last farewell—just one, for pity's sake.

Theodora.

Farewell! Yes—I—I forgive you all the evil you did us.

Ernest.

That *I* did! *I*, Theodora.

Theodora.

You have said it.

Ernest.

That look—that tone!

Theodora.

No more, Ernest—for Heaven's sake!

Ernest.

What did I do that deserves—

Theodora.

Everything must end between us—you must go on as if I didn't exist.

Ernest.

Why this tone?

Theodora.

(*Harshly—and pointing to the door.*) Go!

Ernest.

You want me to go—like this?

Theodora.

My husband is dying in the next room, and I—I am dying here. (*She staggers, and has to lean on the back of the chair to keep herself from falling.*)

Ernest.

(*Rushing to hold her up.*) Theodora!

Theodora.

(*Repulsing him forcibly.*) Don't touch me! (*She tries to take a few steps: again her strength fails, and again he tries to hold her up: she repulses him and draws away from him.*)

Ernest.

Why not?

Theodora.

(*Harshly.*) Because you defile me.

Ernest.

Defile you?

Theodora.

Yes.

Ernest.

I? (*Pause.*) But, good God, what are you saying! You too! That can't be—why, I'd rather die! It can't be true! I must be mad! Say it is not so, Theodora! Just one word of forgiveness, of consolation, or even of pity. I am resigned to leave you and never see you again, even if it should ruin my future! I'll go—but only if people will follow me in my loneliness with their pardon, their affection, their esteem—at least with their pity! Only if you believe that I am loyal, and honest, that I do not defile you, and that I never have; that I am not insulting you, and that I never will! I don't care a whit for the world, I disdain its gossip, and I despise its passions. Let it wound me ever so deeply—and gossip about what I have been—it can never think about me what I think about it! But that you—the purest soul that any imagination could form—you—for whom I would gladly give in this mad war with society—a thousand and one times—not only my earthly life—but my eternal

one—that you should suspect that I am capable ot treachery. (*With great emotion: profound agony, desperately.*) Oh Theodora! This—this is too much!

Theodora.

(*With growing alarm.*) You didn't understand me, Ernest, we must part.

Ernest.

That cannot be!

Theodora.

Quick! I beg of you! (*Points to Julian's room.*) Julian—is suffering.

Ernest.

I know it.

Theodora.

Well don't let us forget it.

Ernest.

No—but I also am suffering.

Theodora.

You, Ernest? Why?

Ernest.

Because you despise me.

Theodora.

Not so bad as that.

Ernest.

But you just said so—

Theodora.

I—I was wrong.

Ernest.

No—you were right! And so we don't suffer equally. In this eternal struggle—in this inexorable warfare, Julian suffers as one on earth—and I as one in Hell.

Theodora.

Oh Heavens! My head is splitting.

Ernest.

And my heart is breaking.

Theodora.

Stop—Ernest—take pity on me.

Ernest.

That is all I ask.

Theodora.

Pity?

Ernest.

Yes—pity. What do you fear from me? What did you think? (*Approaches her.*)

Theodora.

Forgive me if I offended you.

Ernest.

Offend me! No, no! The *truth* is what I want, and I ask it on bended knee with tears in my eyes! (*He kneels, and takes her hand. At this moment Severo appears at Julian's door. He stops there.*)

Severo.

(*Aside.*) Miserable creatures!

Theodora.

Don Severo!

SCENE VIII

(*Theodora, Ernest, and Don Severo. Ernest rises and goes to the right. Don Severo comes between him and Theodora.*)

Severo.

(*To Ernest: with concentrated fury and in a low voice so Julian cannot hear him.*)

I have no words to express my anger and disgust. I will have to content myself with telling you to leave the house instantly! You vile scoundrel!

Ernest.

(*The same.*) Out of respect for Theodora and this house, and for him who suffers in yonder bed, I will have to content myself with responding—by silence!

Severo.

(*Believing that he is about to leave, ironically.*) To keep quiet and obey is the more prudent course.

Ernest.

You didn't understand me: I will *not* obey you.

Severo.

You will stay?

Ernest.

Since Theodora does not repeat the order, here I stay. I was about to leave a little while ago, for good, but God—or Satan, kept me back. You

came, and prevented me, and, as if it were by some infernal magic, I felt roots grow from my legs to fasten me firmly to the spot.

Severo.

I'll call the servants and see if they can't pull up those roots!

Ernest.

Try it! (*He steps toward him with a threatening gesture. Theodora throws herself between them.*)

Theodora.

Ernest! (*Then turning with energy and dignity to her brother-in-law.*) You forget, doubtless, that in my house while my husband is alive—we two alone have the authority and the right to give orders. (*To Ernest, sweetly.*) Not for him—but for me!

(*Ernest cannot hide his joy at seeing her defend him.*)

Ernest.

Do you wish it, Theodora?

Theodora.

I beg it! (*Ernest bows respectfully and goes up stage.*)

Severo.

Your audacity shocks and surprises me as much—no, more, than does Ernest's. (*Steps threateningly toward Theodora. Ernest who is part way up stage stops, but then, making a great effort to control himself, he goes on.*) You dare to raise your head, unhappy woman, and in front of me! Bow your head to the ground! (*Ernest again makes similar movements—but this time more noticeably.*) How can a coward like you find words strong enough to defend yourself? Passion speaks well! (*Ernest who is now up stage stops.*) You forget that before throwing this fellow out—I should throw you out of this house—for you are staining Julian with blood! Why have you come back? (*Taking her brutally by her wrist—gripping her fiercely—and drawing nearer and nearer to her.*)

Ernest.

I can't stand this! No! (*Throws himself between Theodora and Severo and separates them.*) Let her go—you coward!

Severo.

Again?

Ernest.

Yes—again!

Severo.

Why have you come back?

Ernest.

Because you are offending Theodora with your insolence. (*From this moment he is not master of himself.*) I can't stand that! What's to do? Why, come back—come back and punish your audacity and call you coward to your face!

Severo.

Me?

Ernest.

Yes!

Theodora.

No, NO!

Ernest.

Well, he wanted it! I saw him take hold of you angrily—like this! (*He takes Severo's arm violently.*)

Severo.

Such insolence!

Ernest.

That may be—but I'll not let go! Did you ever have a mother? Yes! Did you love her? Very much. And did you respect her even more? Well—that is the way I want you to respect Theodora, and I want you to humble yourself before the grief of this woman, who is sweeter and more honorable than your mother ever was!

Severo.

You say that—to me?

Ernest.

Yes! But I haven't finished yet!

Severo.

I'll have your life!

Ernest.

Yes—my life—but later on! (*Theodora tries to separate them, but he pushes her gently away with one hand without letting go his hold with the other.*) You doubtless believe in a God—in a Creator—a Hope! Very well. As you bend your shaking knees before our Heavenly Father, bend them now before Theodora—and be quick about it! Down to the floor!

Theodora.

Have pity on him!

Ernest.

To the floor! (*He forces him to kneel before Theodora.*)

Theodora.

Enough, Ernest!

Severo.

The Devil take you.

Ernest.

On your feet!

Severo.

You—

Ernest.

I!—

Severo.

For her!

Ernest.

Yes!

Theodora.

No more!—Keep still!

(*Terrified, she motions toward Don Julian's room. Ernest lets go his hold; Don Severo rises and moves toward the left. Theodora goes up stage to Ernest. In this way he and she form a group apart.*)

SCENE IX

Theodora, Ernest, and Don Severo. Then Don Julian and Donna Mercedes.

Julian.

(*Within.*) Let me go I say!

Mercedes.

(*Also within.*) No, for God's sake!

Julian.

It's they—I know—come!

Theodora.

(*To Ernest.*) Go!

Severo.

(*To Ernest.*) My vengeance!

Ernest.

I don't deny it!

(*At this point, enter Don Julian, pale, and emaciated, almost in a dying condition and Mercedes—supporting him. As he appears, Severo is at the left, and Theodora and Ernest together up stage.*)

Julian.

They are together! Where are they going? Stop them! They are running away from me—the traitors! (*He tries to throw himself upon them, but his strength fails and he staggers.*)

Severo.

(*Rushing to support him.*) No!—

Julian.

Severo, they deceived me! They lied! The miserable wretches!

(*While he says this, Mercedes and Severo carry him to a chair at the left.*)

There they are—look! The two of them—she and Ernest! Why are they together?

Theodora and Ernest.

(*Separating.*) No!

Julian.

Why don't they come here?—Theodora!—

Theodora.

(*Holding out her arms to him, but without going to him.*) Julian dear!

Julian.

Come to my arms! (*Theodora throws herself into his arms, and he presses her to him. Pause.*) (*To his brother.*) See? See? I know they are deceiving me! I have her in my arms now, and I am holding fast to her. I could kill her! She deserves it well enough! I look at her—*look at her*—and I can not do it!

Theodora.

Julian!

Julian.

(*Pointing to Ernest.*) And what of him?

Ernest.

Don Julian!

Julian.

How I loved him!—Be quiet—and come here—(*Ernest goes to him.*) (*Holding fast to Theodora.*) Nevertheless—*I* am your master!

Theodora.

And I am your wife!

Julian.

Don't try to lie and deceive me!

Mercedes.

(*Trying to calm him.*) For God's sake,—

Severo.

(*The same.*) Julian—

Julian.

(*To them both.*) Be quiet! Silence! (*To Theodora.*) I guessed it; and now I *know* you love him! (*Theodora and Ernest try to deny it, but he doesn't let them.*) All Madrid knows it!

Ernest.

No, father, it isn't so!

Theodora.

No!

Julian.

You deny it! You deny it! But, it is clear as can be! I feel it in my very being! Because this fever which is burning within me seems to light up my very brain!

Ernest.

All this is the wild imagining of your delirium.

Julian.

You're trying to lie to me!

Ernest.

(*Pointing to Theodora.*) She is innocent.

Julian.

I don't believe you!

Ernest.

For my father's sake, then!

Julian.

Better not to profane his memory!

Ernest.

For the sake of the last kiss my mother gave me.

Julian.

Her last kiss is no longer on your brow.

Ernest.

Then I'll swear by anything you wish!

Julian.

I want no oaths, nor lies nor protests—

Ernest.

Well then, what do you want?

Theodora.

Yes—what do you want?

Julian.

Deeds!

Ernest.

What does he wish, Theodora? What does he ask?

Theodora.

I don't know. What—oh what are we to do, Ernest?

Julian.

(*Who has listened to them with a feverish stare, and instinctive distrust.*) Ah! Thinking up falsehoods before my very eyes? So you are plotting against me, eh?—I see it all!

Ernest.

You see through your fever, not through your eyes.

Julian.

You are right! For a fever is a fire and burns away the bandage which you two put over my eyes, and now I *see!* And now—why do you look so? You traitors! Why are your eyes so bright? Speak, Ernest—it isn't the brightness that tears bring!—Come here—closer to me—closer still. (*He forces Ernest to come near him. Makes him bow his head, and finally to kneel before him. In this way Julian is between the two: Theodora at his side, and Ernest at his feet. In this position he passes his hand over Ernest's eyes.*) You see?—There are no tears! Your eyes are dry!

Ernest.

Forgive me! Forgive me!

Julian.

Well then,—if you want my forgiveness—confess your guilt.

Ernest.

No!

Julian.

Yes!

Ernest.

There is no guilt!

Julian.

Then look at each other before me!

Severo.

Julian!

Mercedes.

Please!

Julian.

(*To Theodora and Ernest.*) Perhaps you are afraid? Don't you love each other like a brother and sister? Then prove it! Your souls will show from your eyes, and will mix their pure rays before my eyes. I will see whether they are rays of light —or of fire—for I am very near you.—You too, Theodora—it must be—come—both of you!—Still closer! (*He forces Theodora to fall before him, he brings them forcibly together and makes them look into each other's eyes.*)

Theodora.

(*Drawing away by a violent effort.*) No—no!

Ernest.

(*Tries to disengage himself but Don Julian holds tightly to him.*) I cannot do it!

Julian.

You love each other—you love each other! I see it plainly! (*To Ernest.*) Your life!

Ernest.

Yes!

Julian.

Your blood!

Ernest.

Everything!

Julian.

(*Holding him down on his knees.*) Be quiet!

Theodora.

(*Restraining him.*) Julian!

Julian.

You defend him? You defend him?

Theodora.

But it isn't for his sake!

Severo.

For pity's sake!

Julian.

(*To Severo.*) Silence. (*To Ernest.*) You are a wicked son!

Ernest.

Father!

Julian.

(*Still keeping him at his feet.*) Traitor!

Ernest.

I'm not, father!

Julian.

Here is the seal which will brand you as a scoundrel—today by my hand—tomorrow by my sword! (*With all his strength he gets up, and strikes Ernest in the face.*)

Ernest.

(*Gives a terrible cry, gets up, and goes to the right, covering his face with his hands.*)
Ah!—

Severo.

(*Stretching his arms toward Ernest.*) Justice!

Theodora.

God! (*She buries her face in her hands, and falls into a chair at the left.*)

Mercedes.

(*To Ernest, as though excusing Julian.*) It was his delirium!
(*These four lines are given very rapidly. Then follow a few moments of stupor. Don Julian still on his feet and looking at Ernest. Donna Mercedes and Severo holding him up.*)

Julian.

It was no delirium—but a punishment, by Heavens! What were you thinking of, ingrate?

Mercedes.

Come—let's go!

Severo.

Come—Julian.—

Julian.

Yes—*now* I will go!
(*He goes painfully towards his room held up by

Severo and Mercedes. He stops from time to time to look at Ernest and Theodora.)

Mercedes.

Quick,—Severo!

Julian.

Look at them—vile things—it *was* justice, wasn't it? I'm sure it was!

Severo.

For Heaven's sake, Julian—for my sake!

Julian.

You are the only one in the world who has loved me. (*Embraces him.*)

Severo.

Yes,—I think that is true.

Julian.

(*Goes on toward his room: he stops near his door to look at them again.*) And she is weeping for him—and doesn't follow me! —Nor does she look at me!—Nor does she see that I am—dying! Yes—dying!

Severo.

Julian!

Julian.

Wait—wait. (*Stops at his door.*) Dishonor after dishonor! Goodbye—Ernest. (*Exeunt Don Julian, Don Severo, and Donna Mercedes.*)

Scene x

(*Theodora and Ernest. Ernest falls into a chair near the table. Theodora stays at the left. A pause.*)

Ernest.

(*Aside.*) What's the use of being loyal!

Theodora.

What's the use of being innocent!

Ernest.

My mind is becoming poisoned.

Theodora.

Oh God! Have pity on us!

Ernest.

Poor child!

Theodora.

Poor Ernest!
(*Up to this point they are apart.*)

Severo.

(*Within. The lines which follow are cries of supreme agony.*) My brother!

Mercedes.

Help!

Pepito.

Quick!

(*Ernest and Theodora rise and come toward each other.*)

Theodora.

Cries of grief!

Ernest.

Of death—you mean!

Theodora.

Let's go quickly!

Ernest.

Where?

Theodora.

In there!

Ernest.

(*Stopping her.*) We can't!

Theodora.

Why not? (*With anxiety.*) I want him to live!

Ernest.

(*The same.*) And I!—But I cannot—(*Motions toward the door.*)

Theodora.

But *I* can! (*She rushes toward Julian's room.*)

LAST SCENE

Theodora, Ernest, Severo, and Pepito. The following are their positions: Ernest, standing at center. Theodora in the door which leads into Julian's room. Severo barring the way, he has followed Pepito from the room.

Pepito.

Where are you going?

Theodora.

(*With desperate anxiety.*) I want to see him!

Pepito.

You can't.

Severo.

Don't let her pass! That woman—in my house! (*To his son.*) Quick—throw her out! Take no pity on her—do it this instant!

Ernest.

What is he saying?

Theodora.

I must be mad!

Severo.

(*To his son, angrily.*) Do what I tell you, even if your mother should forbid you herself! Even if she implores you—! If she weeps—why let her weep—But take her away, or I'll kill her!

Theodora.

Did Julian say that?

Severo.

Yes!

Ernest.

Your husband? That can't be true!

Theodora.

Let me see him!

Severo.

Well, you can see him, and then—leave this house!

Pepito.

(*As though wishing to stop him.*) Father!

Severo.

(*To Pepito—pushing him away.*) Don't interrupt!

Theodora.

But it isn't true!

Pepito.

It is horrible!

Theodora.

You are deceiving me!

Severo.

Come, then, Theodora—come and look! (*He takes her by the arm, to the door into Julian's room, lifts aside the curtains and points into the room.*)

Theodora.

He!—Julian! My Julian!—Dead! (*She says this as she steps backward with a tragic gesture—and falls in a faint at center.*)

Ernest.

Father! (*Covers his face with his hands. A pause. Don Severo looks at them spitefully.*)

Severo.

(*To his son—motioning to Theodora.*) Throw her out!

Ernest.

(*Placing himself over her.*) Coward!

Pepito.

(*Doubtfully.*) But father—

Severo.

(*To his son.*) Do what I say. Are you afraid?

Ernest.

Take pity on her!

Severo.

Pity! She didn't have any on him! (*Points to Julian's room.*)

Ernest.

My blood is boiling—I must leave Spain.

Severo.

That doesn't concern me!

Ernest.

I shall die!

Severo.

Life is short.

Ernest.

For the last time—

Severo.

No. (*To Pepito.*) Go on.

Ernest.

She is innocent. I swear it!

Pepito.

(*As though interceding.*) But father—

Severo.

(*To his son—pointing with hatred at Ernest.*) He lies.

Ernest.

Are you going to throw me out, too? Well, I won't fight against it. I'll follow her. (*Points to Theodora.*) What she will think of the world and its ills I don't know. She has lost her senses for the time being. But I'll tell you what I think!

Severo.

It is useless! You can't keep me from—(*Tries to cross to Theodora.*)

Pepito.

(*Stopping him.*) Father—

Ernest.

No! (*Pause.*) Let nobody go near this woman, for she is mine! That is what the world wants and I accept its decision. It brings her to my arms:—Come, Theodora! (*Lifting her and holding her in his arms at this moment, or whenever the actor thinks is best.*) You throw *her* out of here—*We* obey you!

Severo.

At last—you scoundrel!

Pepito.

You low hound!

Ernest.

I am all that you say. And now you are right! Now I make my confession! Do you want passion? Very well, you can have it—a delirious passion! Do you want love? Very well— a great love! Do you want even more? Well, more you shall have if I am not terrified by it! You invent things and I assimilate them! So tell it—tell it! Let the news fill the city to the echo! But if anyone should ask you who was the go-between in all this infamy, tell him that it was you yourself, and that you were ignorant of it—and with you—the tongues of foolish gossips! Come, Theodora, it seems as if the shade of my mother were placing a kiss upon your pure brow. Goodbye! She belongs to me! May Heaven be the judge between you and me!

Curtain.

